IN HOURS OF LEISURE

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BY

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CONTENTS.

Mother: to whom I owe the greater part
Of all the little good I may have wrought,
To you, with humble hand and reverent heart,
I dedicate this book, in filial thought.

Perhaps amongst its pages you may find
Some echo caught from out your own sweet youth:
Reflected light from sunshine in your mind:
Faint breathings of your own inspiring truth.

At Henley, often in my childhood's days,
We walked, on summer eve, or radiant morn,
Through meadow, or through tangled woodland ways,
Or where the poppies flushed the golden corn.

'Twas there you strove to give me eyes and ears,
To see and hear, and heart to understand:
And I have striven hard these thirty years
To learn the lessons pointed by your hand.

Over those lessons still my head I bow;
For little known, alas! as yet are they.
But you, who taught my feet to walk, will now
Forgive them when they stumble in the way.

And may I not, in giving you these lines,
Look back on him, to-day, who called you wife;
Whose love still fills your lonely days, and shines
With faith whose roots involve the roots of life?

And hope that still his pulses dimly move,
In all things following him I strive to do:
That so this book may doubly gain your love,
As sign that he still lives and speaks to you.

THE STATUE.

A VAST cathedral: here, a man of stone,
Above the long triforium, I stand.
I look to eastward, down the long dark nave,
To where the altar rises 'mid the apse—
Banners, and tapers, incense, flowers, and gold.
Beneath me stretch the aisles on either side.
And where the transept cuts across the nave,
The lantern-tower springs up beyond the roof.
My niche is carven, stool, and cànopy,—
Acorns and oak-leaves, butterflies and birds,
And one small squirrel nibbling at a nut.
I always loved an oak the best of trees.
Certes 'tis very strange I should be here;
Strange—and yet natural enough, in truth.
Most things seem natural when they come to pass.
I wonder how I look up here alone.

I take it no one knows me now I'm stone.
I scarcely know myself, or what I was.
'Tis evident I died some time ago;
And now am turned to stone, and set aloft.
I never dreamed that such would be my end:
The ends we work for oft surprise ourselves.
I recollect 'twas often so in life.
But why this niche, and carven canopy?
And why set up aloft, above the crowd?
I do not think that I can be a saint:
I' the flesh I never was a saint, God knows!
I was as safe a sinner as the best.
But now I'm stone; so I shall sin no more:
For sinning goes against the grain of stone.
Why I am here I think I'll never know.

'Tis rare to see the sunset and the dawn
Stealing athwart the walls, and o'er the roof.
'Tis rare to feel the sunshine warm my feet.
What time, like rainbows in the misty air,
The gorgeous colours from the painted glass
Swim all across the dark and solemn glooms.
Sometimes they make me glow from head to foot-
Ruby and amber, emerald and blue!

St. Matthew yonder, with the saffron robe,
In winter time, is first to take the dawn.
And when, from that clerestory window there,
The sunbeams strike that alabaster tomb,
I know that summer holds the outside world.
If I were man, with weak and dizzying brain,
I dare say I should sicken at this height.
I never liked to look from any height,
But now I like the gloom beneath my feet,
When dusk begins to work its mystery.
Then at the distant altar shine the lamps:
Then at the shrines the little tapers gleam:
And then, through windows where the glass is clear,
And piety has not yet made the light
Take up its parable for holy church,
I watch the gathering darkness find the stars.
Sometimes the wreaths of incense, rising high,
Will spread about the roof in silver haze,
And come between me and the world beneath,
Like summer clouds about a mountain gorge.
The air is always heavy with the scent,
Balsamic—full of comfortable warmth.
The only thing that really gives me pain
Is that strange shuddering that shakes the air

When the great organ mutters low and deep.
It shakes the very niche on which I stand:
It shakes my very inmost heart of stone:
And makes me think of what I used to feel,
Of what I used to do, when I was flesh:—
Of what those people feel who kneel in crowds
Far down beneath me—poor unsettled souls!
And for the moment I remember all—
Ambition—Love—and Grief—and all the rest.
And then it passes. I am stone once more.

But yesterday I saw a man below,
Who beat his hands together on his breast,
And sank upon his knees, and hid his face.
And then I thought why I was like that once!
But now I'm stone, thank heaven; and here, no doubt
I stand till Doomsday and the great white throne;
Seeing the changing skies above my head,
And underneath my feet, the changing crowds.
I may outlive a dozen human lives.
The worst iconoclast would find it hard
To pull me from a perch as high as this.
No hands will touch me save the hand of Time.
I feel that I inherit centuries,—

Passionless, cold, immovable, and grand.
There are advantages in being stone.
You feel a level and profound content,
With just a wholesome touch of self-esteem.
Listen! the Priest is chanting in the apse.
Now from the choir comes a sweet response.
That is the swinging of the thurible.
There goes the wreath of silvery smoke aloft.
Bells chime: and now with solemn tones
The organ takes the calm and reverent air.
Once I remember at a time like this,
I wept, and felt that I must cry aloud!
Oh me! oh me! I do remember all!
Ah! how I loved her! and she was so fair!
And shall I weep no more?—Nay, but I will!
Now whilst the organ touches me with life—
Now whilst the music gives me memory!
Memory is Life! help, Friends! I live—I live!
I am not stone indeed—ah, help me down!
I move—I fall.—God help me!—so—I wake.

THE SPOILS OF MANDALAY.[1]

BENEATH the alien gray of Northern skies
They stand, the desecrated Sanctuaries.

The crowds pass by, unconscious: or, at best,
Give them an idle glance, or idler jest.

Some of those jewels, yonder, glittering,
In the regalia of the Burmese king,—

Girdle, tiara, sceptre, helmet, sword,
A veritable Nibelungen hoard!—

May have bedecked the monarch when his brow
Bent to these shrines, which no one bends to now:

[1] Lines written after a visit to the Indian and Colonial Exhibition, 24th September 1886,—to see the Sanctuaries from Mandalay.

For both are empty ; and 'neath each are writ
The few official words describing it—

"A Royal Sanctuary from Mandalay."
We see as we have eyes to see, they say !

The words mean little, or they mean so much
The mind shrinks back, half frightened from their touch.

Electric lamps will star the trees to-night ;
Fountains will pierce the dark with liquid light :

And the last waltz will echo clear and loud
Above the babble of the motley crowd.

But when the lamps die out, the crowds are gone,
The long unreasonable day is done,
And the slow tramp of watchman sounds alone

Along the silent rooms and corridors
That hold the riches of a hundred shores ;

The darkness must, one thinks, be all astir
With many an unshrined, spectral wanderer.

Strange gods, who seem to fix their cruel gaze
On blood-stained altars of forgotten days.

Idols from Lagos, and black Ashantee;—
From coral islands of the tropic sea;—

Uncouth and ghastly mockeries of man;—
Old, immemorial gods of Yucatan;—

The deities of all the Brahmin host,
From Himalay to Coromandel Coast;—

Shapes of lost magic,—worshipped things, grotesque,
Painted on woods, in savage arabesque;—

All these, methinks, must rise, when midnight comes,
To ghostly beatings of the fetish-drums.—

While high above them all, serene, might stand
The placid images from Buddha Land.

And what to them,—thus following the dream,—
The faith of this, their captor-land, must seem?

Surely no sign of faith would they behold,
Save this—that England's god to-day is Gold.

Dreaming indeed! For dead are one and all
Of those who look from shelf and pedestal.
No conjuration hath the power to call

Back into life the form of any god
On whom Time's hand hath written "Ichabod."

But though the glory be departed hence,
These empty shrines compel our reverence;

Not only for the memories they give,
And for the pain of doom retributive
In things that sanctity and use outlive;

But also for the bodeful thoughts they bring,—
Thoughts half of warning, half of questioning.

For eyes from this our western land are turned
To that great faith, whose unquenched light hath burned

From ages that most present faiths forerun,
Lighting the lands beyond the rising sun.

And Christians scan, with curious gaze afar,
The Christlike life and thought of Guatama.

Countless the years since Asia owned his sway,
And the first flowers upon his altars lay:

Countless the lips that still repeat each day,
"We refuge seek in Buddha," as they pray.

The countries, haply, whence the Wise Men came,
Worshipped at Buddha's shrines, and owned his name

Ere yet Greece breathed beneath wise Solon's codes,
Or heard the music of Anacreon's odes:

Or ever on Jerusalem the weight
Of conquest fell from Babylon the Great;

Shrines, like to these, in many an Indian grove,
May, unto struggling hearts grown weary of
Their burdens, and the bitterness of Love,

Have symbolised Nirvana, and have borne
The message of deep peace to lives forlorn.

And now, amidst the crowds who turn their eyes
On these deserted exiled Sanctuaries,

Are some to whom the sight may bring a sense
Of almost blasphemous irreverence,—
The world a loser with scant recompense,—

A deep regret for things torn from the place
They fitted well, and crowned with coarse disgrace,

And such might almost dream the day draws near
When these void shrines shall have a future here

Great as the past for which they now condone,
When their pale conquerors have learned to own
That he they shrined was worthy of a throne.

Long have we sent the missions far and wide,
To preach the gospel of the Crucified :

Is the day near when those to whom we preach,
The tenets of their older creeds will teach ?

Cities and empires, in the historic past,
Almost as great as ours, and nigh as vast

As that we own to-day by sea and land,
Before their fall,—when doom was close at hand—

Have turned, we know, with weak, half-hearted prayers
To gods dethroned and earlier faiths than theirs.

And 'midst the many signs, in many ways,
Marking the decadence of latter days,

Which seem at work amongst us now, there is
None that hath voice more sinister than this.

Therefore it is, that meaning nigh as great
As that these shrines had in their royalest state

They have to-day: they are a warning hand
From out the growing gloom of Buddha Land.

And so,—though crowds may pass them idly by,—
Though suns be dim for them, and dark their sky,—

These Sanctuaries—this one with fast-closed gate,
And open that, but both disconsolate;—

With such surroundings as might suit a Fair,—
Our London's Champs Elysées,—still can bear

A strange significance which makes them rife
With power occult, and touches them with life:

With life not born beneath their native skies,
With power undreamt of by their votaries.

Our hands have borne them from their sunny East,
Robbed them of altar, worshipper, and priest;
And yet in this thing they are royal, at least,—

That in the glittering of their glass and gold
A something lives which we may well behold

With national awe:—a message and a sign,
Scarcely less clear than that which once did shine,
Written in unseen letters, on each shrine,

When in the sun-blaze of the tropic day,
They flashed among the palms at Mandalay.

For—standing silent in this noisy air,
They say, to hearts that feel and ears that hear—Beware

THE BELLS OF IS.

(WRITTEN FOR RECITATION WITH MUSIC.)

These lines are founded on an old Breton legend. M. Renan, in the Preface to his work, *Recollections of my Youth*, says:—"One of the most popular legends of Brittany is that relating to an imaginary town called Is, which is supposed to have been swallowed up by the sea at some unknown time. There are several places along the coast which are pointed out as the site of this imaginary city, and the fishermen have many strange tales to tell of it. According to them, the tips of the spires of the churches may be seen in the hollow of the waves when the sea is rough; while during a calm the music of their bells ringing out the hymn appropriate to the day rises above the waters. I often fancy that I have at the bottom of my heart a city of Is, with its bells calling to prayer a recalcitrant congregation."

THE bells of Is are ringing
  Far down my heart to-day:
They call me to the memory
  Of scenes long passed away—

Of days almost forgotten—
  Of feelings long past by ;—
Sweet as the scent of flowers
  We loved in infancy.
The buried past is sending
  Its music up to my ears,
Through the seas that have flooded it over
  With the tangle and drift of years :—
Like bells from those buried cities
  The fisher folk tell us of,
Which they hear on summer evenings,
  As they float on the waves above.
The bells of Is are ringing
  With music so sweet and rare,
That the pathos of their message
  Seems more than I can bear.
And I almost find in my heart
  To cry to them, " Cease ! Let be !—
Let me hear the rush of the billow,
  The plash of the wind-rippled sea,
The noise of the wind in the cordage,
  The shriek, if you will, of the blast,—
But not that ghostly ringing
  From the bells of a buried Past !"

And yet their music is tender—
  Those bells that rise through the wave
And the ear still listens and listens;
  And the eyes pierce the watery grave,
In whose depths of transparent crystal
  We re-make the Long Ago,
And see the past still standing
  In a twilight world below.
Up, up through the waters welling
  The memories rise amain:—
Regret that with joy is blended,
  And joy that is fused with pain!

They are ringing to me the memory
  Of a quaint, old-fashioned town:—
Red roofs beside a river
  Where barges go up and down.—
Of days when wheat and poppies
  And I were much of a height:
And the grass seemed a tropic jungle;
  And butterflies, blossoms in flight.
Of radiant summer evenings,
  With voices of children afar;
As lying awake, I would listen,

And watch for the evening star.
Of happy days on the river,
'Mid lilies and meadow-sweet,
Where cattle knee-deep in the water,
Stood screened from the noontide heat.
Of the lock, with its weirs and hatchways,
Its woodwork and dripping moss;
And the noise of the chain at the ferry,
As the boat was punted across.
Of a dear, old-fashioned garden,—
Roses, and sunflowers tall:
And the scent of the long box borders,
And ripening fruit on the wall.

They are ringing to me the memory
Of cloisters and chapel chimes:
And young romantic friendships
In happy college times.
Of the tones of the distant organ
Vibrating in the air;
Till the very stones made answer,
And hearing rose to prayer.—
Of hours with chosen comrades;
And unforgotten words,

That have grown to be the sweetest
  Amongst life's master-chords.—
And now I am hearing music
  On a silvery lagoon,
Where the marble walls of Venice
  Sleep in the light of the moon.
On, on in a gondola sliding,
  We float 'mid reflected stars;
As, wafted over the water,
  Is borne the sound of guitars.—
A distant break of laughter:—
  The tolling of a bell:—
Dance music from a window:—
  A murmur of farewell.
A lonely mountain pasture;
  Fir forests far below:
The moonlight on the glacier;
  The sunset on the snow;
The tinkle of the cow-bells,
  The plash of mountain rills;
The avalanche's thunder
  Among the eternal hills.
The foam-flecked, gray Atlantic:—
  The blue, historic sea:—

All—each—up through the Present
  Send voices unto me.

Oh, bells of Is! oh, bells of Is!
  You ring of deeper things:—
Of thoughts that shrink from utterance,
  Of high imaginings.—
Of love that lives for ever,
  In spite of earth's "farewell":—
Of doubt too loud to silence:
  Of faiths too dumb to tell.
Oh, bells of Is! oh, bells of Is!
  Ring fainter, lower yet:
Be now your mystic message
  In tenderest cadence set.
Speak of a face beloved;
  The memory of a kiss;
A hand we daily long for;
  A voice we daily miss!

Oh, bells of Is! oh, bells of Is!
  Deaf were the heart and ears
That never heard you ringing
  Your psalm of vanished years.

The quaint old Breton legend
  Rings through our daily strife:
Its story is an image,
  A parable of life!—
When for a space we listen,
  As at some eventime,
And upward, through the Present,
  The bells of Memory chime.
Pause:—listen in the silence:
  Lest we their message miss!
Ring on—your heart-made music,
  Ring on! sweet bells of Is!

THE SIGNALMAN.[1]

(WRITTEN FOR RECITATION.)

AT a level crossing far down the line,
Stood a signal-box with its points and sign.
White wooden gates railed off the road,
Save when carts went by with market load;
Or some one drove to the little town
That stood at the bend of the far-off down;
Or the labourers passed: or, night and morn,
The postman came with sound of horn.
The lamps burnt steadily all night,
Giving their silent speech of light.
Each shining green or crimson spark
Sent out some message through the dark.

[1] The leading fact of this story is a true one. I wrote it for recitation in 1880. Since then the tale has become a popular one, and many versions of it have been arranged for recitation.

And when the trains went by, by day,
The signals would change ; and, far away,
The answering signs would fall or rise,
And the trains would whistle their shrill replies.
Hard by—in its strip of garden ground—
Stood the pointsman's cottage. All around,
In marshy flats and meadows wide,
The country stretched on every side.
There pollards marked the river-brink ;
And cattle, lowing, trooped to drink.
A line of aspens in the west ;
A windmill ; here and there, a nest
Of red-roofed, moated farms ; great beds
Of water-reeds with plumy heads ;
Straight roads, with dykes on either hand ;
And miles on miles of pasture-land ;
These gave the place its character.
A land where little seemed to stir !
Dreary, when skies were dull and gray ;
But on a quiet, sunny day,
When the far distance melts away,
Having a beauty all its own :
A noble beauty that alone
The sea can rival or come near,

Of light and space and atmosphere.
Even the trains that onward tore,
With rattle and rumble and rush and roar,
Could not break up the peace serene
Of this sweet, pastoral, English scene.

Here lived the signalman. His post
Demanded care and trust, almost
As great as any man alive
Could well be called upon to give.
The man is worth a passing gaze:
A hero in his humble ways.
His face is bronzed with tropic clime.
In India he had served his time
In some line-regiment. Now had come
To this spot:—pleased to find a home
Near to the place where, years before,
He met the girl to whom he swore
His faith: who, to the Indian shore
Followed her soldier-husband: there
To die—and leave, as token fair
Of love, one child—a girl. This child
Tamed in him all that once was wild.
She grew for him the life of life;

Centering his love for child and wife.
She now was barely four years old:
Rosy cheeks, and hair of gold,
Eyes that held the sky's blue rays,
Dimpled limbs, and winsome ways,
Made her such a thing of light,
You seemed the better for the sight.
And everything he did or sought
Was hers, and looked to her, in thought.

See him now, one summer's evening,
  In the garden, hard at toil;
Plucking weeds from 'mongst the blossoms,
  Breaking up the sun-dried soil.
Hear him whistle, happy-hearted:
  Now, a moment, see him stand,
Whilst the child's soft little fingers
  Clasp his strong and tawny hand.
Sweet! how sweet it is! and peaceful!
  From the golden meadow land
Comes the laugh of schoolboys, bathing;
  Broad, the sun hangs in the west;
Thrushes sing on leafy copses;
  Rooks fly, cawing, home to nest.

With a childish laugh of gladness,
  Turns the little maid away;
Seeing some new flower to gather,
  Or some fresh device for play.
Then he stoops, and goes on working,
  Thinking of the days gone by:
And his thoughts go fleeting eastward,
  And he sees the Indian sky.
Overhead the great bananas
  Stretch their palm-fronds, broad and flat :-
Now he hears the drum and bugle :—
  Now he—— listen! what was that?
In the far, extremest distance,
  Sound like thunder, faint and low;
And he lifts his head and listens;
  Then he puts down spade and hoe.
The train is due—the down express.
Do you not hear it?—listen :—Yes.
Like to the noise of muffled drums,
Through the quiet air a faint pulse comes.
There! do you hear it?—there again!
At yonder junction another train
Must wait for this to pass. The sign
That tells that other train the line

Is blocked to it, or stands at "clear,"
Is, by this pointsman, worked from here.
So the fate of the train that onward comes,
  And of that which at the junction stands,
Depends on the signalman turning the points :—
  Their hundred lives are in his hands.
The gate that leads to the line is ajar—
  Strange ! for 'tis always his thought and care
To keep it closed—so he makes it fast,
  And goes to the foot of the wooden stair.
Hark ! the signal-bell's "ting, ting,"
And the wires jerk and swing :—
And nearer, nearer, nearer,
And clearer, clearer, clearer,
Comes the rattle, and rumble, and roar, and shriek ·
And he goes to the points—when lo ! his cheek
Is blanched as with sudden frost of death,
And his eyeballs start, and he gasps for breath :—
He cannot move—he cannot speak—
He tries—but tries in vain—to shriek !
All strength from limb and spirit fails.
For he sees—his child—between the rails.
Sleeping, she lies there, bright and fair,—
Low on the ground shines her golden hair :—

In his soul the conflicting storm grows wild,
　As the questions go up, with maddening cry :—
Shall he do his duty ? or save his child ?
　Which *is* his duty ? great heaven, reply !
And nearer, nearer, nearer, nearer,
Clearer, clearer, clearer, clearer,
With rattle and rumble and roar and scream,
The train comes on like a terrible dream.
It is rushing onward to certain doom.
It is almost here. He sees it loom
Through the mist in his eyes. In his hands is its fate.
In another moment 'twill be too late.

The soldier-instinct of former life
Comes back in that moment of awful strife.
Like a bugle-call Duty speaks, clear and plain :
　He leaps to the signal : he seizes the rod :
He turns the points : he saves the train :
　And trusts his child to God.

And not in vain was that heaven-born trust.
　For the train rushed by with fiery breath ;
It faded away with its cloud of dust ;
　And then came a silence as of death.

To open his eyes he did not dare,
  As, with hand on the rod, and teeth hard set,
He stood like a statue, motionless, there,
  His pallid brow with anguish wet.
When a child's laugh rang out, sweet and clear:
And the one word, "Father!" fell on his ear:
And he turned and looked: and there, behold,
Shone the rosy face, and the tresses of gold!
The train had passed over the child as it fled,
Nor injured a hair of its little head.
And she ran to him, clapping her tiny palms,
  And, wondering, asked what it was, and smiled
And the strong man caught her up in his arms,
  And wept like a little child.

THY KINGDOM COME![1]

THY Kingdom come. Sore need I have, Thou knowest,
That it should come, and quickly, unto me;
Before I sink still nearer to the lowest,
And lose the far-off light that yet I see.

My Kingdom,—Lord, its glory is departed;
Its palaces are low; its skies are gray:
And here I sit, 'mid ruins, listless-hearted.
"Thy Kingdom come," is all that I can say.

Thy Kingdom, in its splendour and its beauty;
Let now its reign of freedom come to me.
"Nay: rather, up! and get thee to thy duty:
Seek for it there, and it shall come to thee."

[1] Published in *Good Words*.

TO SOME FIR-TREES.

GAZING across the valley, I see,
  O'er the spires and roofs of the town,
A mile away, or more it may be,
  The crest of a noble down.

Often the smoke from this factory place
  Curtains it out from view:
And often its form I can barely trace
  In mysterious lines of blue.

But when a sunset breaks through the cloud,
  And blazons the sky with gold;
And the work is done, and the smoky shroud
  Down the distant valley is rolled:

I, sitting out here on the window-sill,
See, pencilled against the light,
A tuft of fir-trees, afar, on the hill,—
The crown to its topmost height.

They tell me that, though from the chimneys afar,
They are blighted by poisoned wind:
But to me they seem, and to me they are,
The kindliest of their kind.

For they seem to possess a magical power
To whisper my spirit away
From the noise of the street, the fret of the hour,
The weariness of the day.

I forget the clangour of hammer and plate,
The clash of irons and steels;
I forget the air with its smoky weight,
And the clatter and whirr of the wheels;—

And I see calm rivers embosomed in wood;
And lakes that are clear as glass;
And gardens in June, when the air is good
With the scent of new-mown grass.

Anon under windclipt oaks I lie,
On the slope of a hill: and below,
The seagull utters its lonely cry,
And the waves are broken in snow.

The cuckoo is calling from woods afar;
I can hear the weir at the mill:
And the church-bell chimes, as the evening star
Shines over the edge of the hill.

Such scenes I see as I gaze at those trees:
They have made many moments bright:
And have linked themselves unto memories
That carry a lifelong light.

Thanks, thanks, O fir-trees on the hill
That stands above the town!
Ere I leave this city of forge and mill
I shall climb that distant down;

And when I reach you I'll bend the knee,
And greet you with loving signs:
And wish you a worthier eulogy
Than is chanted to you in these lines.

IN THE LAUTERBRUNNEN VALLEY.

THE sunlight climbed aloft an hour ago.
We watched it creeping up the mountain wall—
A gray shade rising, whilst the glow above
Deepened until it seemed to burn the rock.
Now all is growing dusky: and a sense
Of something supernatural holds the place.
The river, hoarse with telling secrets dark
Of its high glacier-prison far away,
Answers the softer and continuous voice
Of waters filmed and falling in mid air.
But these are sounds that make a solitude:
And other sound is none. The stir and life
That buzzes yonder, two miles off or more,
Has long been lost. These mountain vales and heights
Are strong and big enough to hold their own
'Gainst all the noisy crowd that does its best

To spoil and mar the beauty that it seeks.
We walk a little way from off the road,
Press farther than the cluster of hotels,
And nature meets us with as full a face
As we can bear to look upon : sometimes
So full we have to drop our eyes in awe.
What are the subtle secrets and the hopes
That lay their spell upon a scene like this?
An unknown and unanswered question lies
Across it. Let it be : and look and look,—
And live in looking :—'tis enough. To look
A lifetime were to leave a world unseen.

The dusk has deepened. Here and there 'twould seem
That night already has begun its reign.
The narrow strip of valley would be dark
But for the light reflected from a cloud
That holds the sunset which we cannot see.
Between the fields the road winds on and on,
Through giant gateways of the towering rock,
To where the glacier closes up the vale
And thunders downward on the Schmadribach.
The strip of sky looks strangely far away;
And gazing up the eastern precipice

Between a chasm in the rock, behold !—
Thousands of feet above us in the air,
The Eiger all transfigured into flame,—
Ablaze with sunset,—golden 'gainst the blue,—
A fairy world of glory and of death !

It is a scene of wonder and romance.
I have no power to put it into words ;
But I have heard it all, and felt "'tis there !"
In some of Wagner's music. Yes : *it* said
Something akin to this. And you, my friend,
You hear, and feel it too, and understand.
We look, and look, and see it plainly writ :
We listen, and we hear it clearly.—What ?
Ah ! for the Name ! I wrestle, and am lame.
But we are not alone : and other eyes,
And other ears, have seen and heard as well :
Ay, see and hear with fuller sense than ours.
We stretch our hands to them : they understand.

CARCASSONNE.

(WRITTEN FOR RECITATION.)

Adapted from a song by Gustave Nadaud.

THE lovely valley of the Aube leads down
To Carcassonne, an ancient Roman town.
Far off, above the nearer hills, one sees
The ridges of the Eastern Pyrenees.
Some half way up the valley stands Limoux.
The only thing that once would hurry through
The village was the stream that gave its name
Unto the vale. The summers went and came;
The seasons changed: but other change was none.
It lived its own life. Till ten years agone
The busy world stopped short at Carcassonne.

And in this quiet nook of southern France,
With days that knew small touch of variance,

A peasant lived who never once had been
More than a few short miles away, nor seen
A larger place than this Limoux. To him
The outside world was mythical and dim.
Toulouse—and Paris—and Bordeaux—and Rome,—
Ah, yes: they all were there:—but this was home.
One place he longed to see, and only one:—
He'd meant to go, and yet had never gone:—
It was the city yonder—Carcassonne.

He said, "I'm growing old. Nigh seventy year
I've lived my life, and worked the months round, here.
And yet—I doubt not wisely—God has willed
My fondest wish should never be fulfilled:—
A wish that I have fostered since a lad,
The one desire that I have always had.
But now I know—we learn it often thus
In disappointments that are sore to us,—
There's perfect happiness on earth for none.
I shall not have my wish fulfilled for one:
No, I shall never go to Carcassonne.

"One sees the town upon a clear, fine day
Beyond the mountains yonder, far away.

To reach it you must go across the plain :
'Tis five leagues there, and five leagues back again.
They say the road's a good one ; and I've known
Folks who have gone there, all the way, alone.
Ah ! if the vintage were but good this year !—
The grapes will not turn yellow yet, I fear—
But if the sun had only brightly shone
Prosp'rous the year had been for every one ;
And so I might have gone to Carcassonne.

"They tell me that each day, week in, week out,
A week of Sundays, every day, no doubt,
One sees crowds always going up and down,
Hither and thither all about the town.
And on the promenades and terraces,
Smart dresses, music, everything you please !
Nay : you may even see, at one time, there
A Bishop, and two Generals ! you stare !—
'Tis true. A castle too—a mighty one !
Huge as the palaces of Babylon !
Think of it, sir !—and all in Carcassonne !

"The Curate he was right, that I confess :
He spoke the very truth and nothing less.—

'We look too high, we want too much,' said he—
A sermon to remember,—'for, you see
How often thus by our desires we fall:
Ambition, O my friends! destroys us all.'
Quite true. But, all the same, if we should get
A few nice days of pleasant weather yet,—
Say two or three,—before October's gone,—
Mon Dieu! I then would say Thy will be done!—
I still might get as far as Carcassonne.

"Ah, God forgive me, if my prayer be wrong!
One always wants too much, no doubt, as long
As life remains. Ambition?—yes—it's true.
But still I'm sure it must have fall'n to you
To see some men get what they want, yet be
No whit the worse:—well now, that puzzles me.
My godchild—she is married now—has seen
Perpignan—yes, sir: and my wife has been,
With our son François—not to go alone,—
As far (you'll scarce believe it!) as Narbonne!
But I—I've never been to Carcassonne.

"Is it a foolish and a sinful thing,
This wish? Peace and contentment age doth bring

In much—I have my work when I am strong;
I get to church; and, when the days are long,
I do my bit of gardening. 'Twould be wrong
To say that there is much that I regret.
No: still I'm bound to say there lingers yet
That one wish of my boyhood—that alone.
I'm sorry. But it's true I have that one.
Yes, I should like before my life is done—
I should!—I should!—to go to Carcassonne."

"Cheer up, old friend, for go you shall!" I cried.
"Ay, and we'll go together, side by side.
We'll go to-morrow if the day is fine."
And in a brimming glass of good white wine
We pledge good luck to the auspicious day.
We started. All the world was bright and gay.
The village all came forth to see us start.
We sat beneath the awning in the cart.
And as we passed along a sweet smile shone
Upon his face, as he, to every one
We met, cried out, "I go to Carcassonne!"

Down through the valley, and across the plain;
Over the Aube, made hoarse with autumn rain;

Past dusty thickets where the crickets sing;
And vintage walls where fruit was ripening;
Through busy little towns and villages,
Where folks were sitting underneath the trees;
We drove. The diligence went past anon.
A cart with oxen yoked came slowly on.
And then, just where the cross roads meet in one,
We saw the sign-post. Half the way was done.
I pointed out the words—"To Carcassonne."

But ah! may heaven forgive us all, say I,
For, as we halted in some shade near by,
I turned, I say, to point the sign-post out.
He had been silent for some time. A doubt
Struck on me. "Are you tired, old friend?" I said.
He answered not. I touched him.—He was dead.
Bells on the harness jingled. Far away,
The great plains sleeping in the sunshine lay.
The road, a long white line, before us shone.
A clock struck noontide. Half the way was done.
But he—he never went to Carcassonne.

Limoux is changed. Since then its quiet ways
Have heard the roar and scream that nowadays

Alters for good or ill all places such
As this. And Carcassonne—changed too? In much,
No doubt: but not that Carcassonne he sought.
Changing for all, it still is changed in nought:
For it is built upon enchanted ground.
Ah! who has seen it? was it ever found?
Think not this peasant only, he alone,
Dreamt of this place: 'tis nigh to every one.
For all the world there is a Carcassonne.

A PROTESTATION.

My life has laughed to scorn my lip's white creed;
  To Faith I oft have bent a trait'rous knee;
I have been liar both in word and deed:—
    But have been true to thee.

My heart is like the trodden sandy beach
  That every tide will wash and smooth anew:—
But I have graved, beyond the billows' reach,
    "Fidelis" unto you.

I crowned myself with weeds and poison-blooms;
  Blistered life's brows with hemlocks of the dead:
Bedecked my shrines with flowers fed from tombs:—
    But lilies for your head.

I have not done one thing 'twere well to do;
  I have been false to all things that are true:—
But—thro' the darkness one far glimpse of blue!—
    I have—God knows—loved you.

TO THE DEPARTING SUMMER.

THE light is going from us day by day,
  And darkness spreads his kingdom in the night:
To other lands the summer fleets away,
  Breaks from our grasp, and passes from our sight.

Something has gone more precious than the rose—
  A spirit, leaf or blossom far above:—
Something no words can ever quite disclose—
  Voiceless as joy, yet sensible as love.

The air with growth no longer now is rife:—
  The land holds not those rich exuberant powers,
That almost satiate the heart with life,
  And make the very grass burst forth in flowers.

Now could I seek, as swallows seek, a shore
  Southward and sunward, far from Northern frost,
Where I might find blue sky and flowers once more,
  And overtake the summer we have lost.

Yet I do Summer-time so well adore,
  And treasure up so tenderly her smile,
That if her absence makes me love her more,
  I willingly will part with her awhile;

Nor, with irreverent and intemperate feet
  Pursue her wildly: but, content, await,
Till she return, grown doubly dear and sweet,
  Love to reward and Joy to recreate.

TO A PEAL OF BELLS.

Oh, sovereign bells, your music troubles me;
 It sounds so joyous, and a speech so clear!
And yet the joy is veiled in mystery:
 The speech, an unknown one, to any ear.

I cannot settle to my work. A flush
 Fevers my hand and heart. All things around
Seem poor and trivial in the clang and rush
 Of your imperious and compelling sound.

Oh the sweet clamour! how it fills my ears,
 And probes me with unreasonable regret,—
With hopes of what I know not—shadowy fears,—
 With days gone by—and summers that have set.

With hours of sorrow and of festival—
  Almost with thoughts of having lived before—
With painful efforts vainly to recall
  Something forgot, or gone to come no more!

I wish that you would cease, O tyrant bells!
  You come between me and my life to-day.
O'erpowered by your strong but nameless spells
  I wait until your reign has passed away.

THE FRIENDS.

It was a day so wonderful to me
That, looking back across the level plain
Of weeks that knew small change of scene and thought,
It rises like a richly-wooded hill
Lit with the glow of "Memory's sunset light."
I thought that it would be a tedious day :
For they, you know, were going out to spend
The day in open air, with picnic feast.
"And you, too," Arthur said, "are going out
To see great sights, and breathe a summer air,
In this new poem by the Laureate."
And laughingly he brought the book to me.
I took the book, but could not answer him
With badinage : for I was vexed or sad.
Patience is difficult when days are bright :

'Tis hard to be, amidst the general song,
A dumb, dead note that answers not to touch.
And so, with silent lips, and face that wore
A smile with lamentable want of grace,
I listened to their "*Au revoirs.*" And then
I heard their happy voices as they passed
Adown the lawn, and sloping shrubberies,
To where the boat was waiting them below.
Then came the sound of mooring chains unloosed:
And then anon the rhythmic pulse of oars:
And then I fear some tears of fretfulness
Made dim my eyes with vain but sharp regret.
For then the narrowing circle of my life,
Had but begun to close and shut me in,
And all the weight of loss was new and strong.
But none was happier than was I that day.
And thus it came about. My fretful heart,
As is its custom from my boyhood's years,
Full soon began to soothe itself with song.
Song, quotha?—doggrel of the tritest rhymes:
And somewhat morbid too, and weak of heart:—
A poor thing, verily: but yet its own.—
And therefore sweet and full of calming strength.
The uncut book that Arthur gave to me

Was held irreverently to make a desk.
I fear the sacred flame that lay within
Gave out no spark of its Promethean heat
To touch my pen with any answering fire.
I cannot now recall a single verse.
Indeed I soon put pen and book aside
Before a score of lines were pressed to shape;
Forgetting them, and all my fretfulness,
In calm renewal of a healthier mind.
Shall I not therefore love my humble Muse?
For such the work she wrought in me that day:
And such the work she oftentimes hath wrought.
Many the weary hour that she has cheered:
Many the pain her songs have lulled to sleep,
Or brought me strength to bear: and many, too,
The Beauty she has nursed, and brought to sight,
The Evil she has robbed of Victory.

Between the woods and water meadowland
The sloping fields were golden-gray with wheat:
And one was scarlet with the poppy blooms.
The hills above the woods rose into downs,
With here and there a gleam of silvery chalk,
A clump of firs, a zigzag clambering path.

Far down the valley, hazy with the heat,
A line of poplars rose beyond the bridge
That winds, with quaint uneven arch and curve,
Across the broad and shallow river-bed.
Even the farthest hills were pencilled clear:
But faint in depths of sunlit atmosphere.
The air blew on my face, fulfilled with scent;
Remembrances of rose and mignonette,
With messages from clover fields abloom.
In those sweet wafts of spice I seemed to taste
The breath of zones that lie beneath the sun,
And strange impressions I had never felt
Of scenes and countries I had never seen,
Rose on me like forgotten memories.
Faint bleatings came from off the meadowlands.
Jetty, the cow, went wading through the pool:
Whilst underneath the ample spreading elms
The sheep were gathered, screened from noontide heat.
A flying, twittering band of swallows came,
Skimmed past the window toward the o'erhanging eaves,
And thereon held a moment's parliament.
The cuckoo knew its latest day had come,
And told its name once more to all the hills.
The blackcap whistled loud in neighbouring copse,

And drowsy answers from the dovecot near,
Soothed all the air with cooing lullabies.

An unseen world was my real world that day;—
The spirit-world that we call Memory,—
As real a world as Love, or Faith, or Hope!
I journeyed far in thought: and heard and saw:
And lived in everything I saw and heard:—
And came home richer, ay, and happier too!
Home? To myself, my chair, this room, the hour!
These were the home to which myself came back—
From journeying, whither? It seems hard to tell.
Say—in the world that lies within us all.
Within us, and around us, everywhere.
Life is so busy nowadays, things seen
Are so imperious in their thousand claims,
We seldom take these journeys. Well, perhaps,
So best. A question. Some might say 'twere time
Wasted, to take these unseen journeyings.
If so, I always "wasted time," I fear;
And even think that "wasted time" well spent.
The gain to me was often definite;
Intangible, and hard to put in words;
Only to be translated into life

And living :—but, when once translated thus,
Discernible and sensible to all.
Yes: just those "wasted" times are now to me
The only life I have: and from their work
My present life is made. For what the world
Calls life is closed to me. This room were it
Save for that unseen world of which I speak.
But now the room seems wide as any world,
And I live in it, happy and content.
Nay: I am bold to fancy, on that day,
I, lying dreaming on my sofa here,
Did more, and gained more positive reward,
Than some that found a task for every hour,
Or on whose books the day filled many a line.
There's self-conceit! At least 'tis evident
The good I brought back from my unseen world
That I belaud so lustily, possessed
A saving grace of human vanity.

The sun was shining. Out I went in thought,
And wandered through a hundred pleasant scenes.
I half-believe that Fairies (for, you know,
I always did my best to keep their haunts
Undesecrated) came to me that day,

And conjured up these well-beloved scenes.
My words would do them wrong, and blurr their truth.
Go out into the garden, down the lane,
Across the hill, by river, wood, and field.
The scenes will not be clearer to your eyes
Than were their shadows unto me that day.
One only will I tell you of:—the names
Alone will paint the scene to you—
Lac Leman, and the slopes above En Caux!
Ah! you remember it as well as I.
Some days are festas in our lives—bright days,
Mostly unheralded:—and that was one.
You know the scene so well! better than I:
I often see it in remembrance.
And once whilst lying on that mountain side,
In thought, I put remembrance into words:—

Oh the lovely light that lay
On the mountains far away,
That delicious summer day!

When we rested from the heat
In the pinewood, cool and sweet;
Whilst the world lay at our feet.

Butterflies, with colours pied
On their gorgeous wings spread wide,
Came sailing down the mountain side.

In a wood-trough, quaint and old,
Water, crystal-clear and cold,
Dripped through mosses green and gold.

Then we left the arching trees,
Coming out on terraces
Starred with lilac crocuses.

Still we climbed on, up to where,
From the open hillside bare,
Came the wine-like mountain air.

Silent! nothing could be heard;
Not the song of any bird;
Not the sound of aught that stirred;

Save the murmur, soft and sweet,
Born of life and noontide heat
'Mong the grasses at our feet;

And the cow-bells, far away,
Tinkling from the fields that lay
On the lower slopes of Naye.

Silence, ample and intense,
Filled the heart and every sense
With a natural reverence.

There, upon the flowery grass,
Down we lay: and never was
Hour that did so quickly pass.

High above the world we seemed;
Over us the white clouds dreamed:
Far below the blue lake gleamed.

Mile on mile, it stretched away
From the Jura's sunlit gray,
To the woods of Bouverêt.

Glittering like a silver throne,
High the Dent du Midi shone
O'er the Valley of the Rhone.

Very faint and far below,
Rose the poplars, row on row
Where the water-lilies grow.

Tiny wings upon the lake,
Sails of barques the light would take:
Long lines curving in their wake

Every moment wonder grew:
Every moment beauties new
Seemed to rise upon our view.

And our hearts as we lay there
Were as free from stain of care
As the stainless summer air.

And we vowed nor pain nor change
Ever should our hearts estrange,
Whereso'er our paths might range.

Earth such youth and freshness wore,
Seemed as though the vow we swore
Never had been vowed before:

Seemed as though a vow so sweet,
Made in time and place so meet,
Could not ever know defeat.

But the bright hours would not stay:
That sweet happy summer day
Passed with all good things away.

Yet it left a memory
Which Time cannot teach to fly,
Which will never pass us by.

And a lovelier spirit-light
Than mere sunshine, howe'er bright,
Makes it holy in our sight.

Yes: makes it holy, for such hours are blest.
The consecration of a perfect joy
Doth rest upon them, setting them apart.
Many and bright the scenes I saw that day:
And found in all the joy of very life.—
Moorland and meadow; lane and sandy beach;
The perfumed forests of the Haute Savoie;
The chalêt where we spent those happy weeks

Beneath the Jüngfrau's crown of virgin snow;
Sweet Maggiore sleeping in the light;
Dalhousie's woods; and Clifton's hawthorn groves;
An orchard on the hillside, looking down,
Through apple-boughs thickset with golden fruit,
At silvery surf that ripples on the beach
A hundred feet below us—and the Bay
Curving, with richly-wooded cliffs and coombes,
Away to red-rocked Portledge, and the Bar,
And Exmoor melting in the summer clouds.
I will not weary you by telling more
Of what I saw or where I went that day,
In thought: or with how real an eye
I seemed to see the scenes of memory.
So passed the morning light to afternoon.
Then whilst I read the perfect verse that tells
Of that poor "Scholar Gypsy"—poem beloved!—
Where Oxford, like a spiritual Thebes,
Builds itself up upon a poet's song,—
I heard a footstep more than song to me,—
A footstep that I little dreamed to hear,
Thinking the foot was many miles away—
And you came in—welcome as Health itself!
Then, with surprise and pleasure, how you came,

And why, where you had been, and whom had seen,
With frequent question met by swift reply;
And all the joy of friends who meet again
After long absence marked by many a change,
To find their love unchanged amid it all,
The hour of sunset came ere we had ceased
To feel the wonder of the clasping hand.

My life has moved in very narrow grooves.
As I review it, lying passive here,
It seems, by turns, pathetic, or to touch
On something almost humorous—'tis so small!
There's many a boy who has not left his teens
Is older far than I, and takes his place—
And is allowed it—in the world: whilst I,
At thirty, seem a sort of grown-up child,
Who has his toys, and lives a little life
That does not fit the fashion of the world.
Oh! I assure you I am much amused
To look, as an observer, at myself.
And I can add up all that I am worth,
Subtract, divide, and give you the result
With an exactness that is excellent.
I think too much about myself? No doubt.

In that at least I fit the world to-day.
We modern folk are students of ourselves.
We like to know our mind's anatomy :
Or better still, anatomise our friends !
Some that I know would almost like to ascribe
A motive to the sun for shining so :
But it is true, I'm quite ashamed to own
How much I find I interest myself !
Well, those I love seem vital parts of Me,
And so the interest is not wholly Self.
What's that you hold ? a bit of sweet wild-thyme.
Ah ! what an eloquence of memory
A scent possesses ! Dreams of boyhood come.
The scent fumes up with penetrating breath
Into dark secret cells about the brain
That only scent or sound can ever reach.
I seem again to climb with boyish zest
About the ruin yonder on the hill.
We talk of high adventure, wondrous deeds,
Of Grecian heroes, Middle Age romance,
Strange tales of magic, and Arabian Nights.
Anon we paddle, bare-legged, in the stream,
Declare the pine trees overhead are palms,
And call our schoolboy jackets coats of mail :

Or you insist on being Inca-King,
And making me Pizarro 'gainst my will:
Whilst each of us in turn, from time to time,
Suggests a speech to fit the other's part,
Where history finds an unexpected turn.

I'll shut my eyes, and dream we're boys again:
The almost godlike joy of early youth
Steals o'er my spirit: let me clasp your hand.
Now, go—and sing that song to me—you know—
The one I wrote when you were going away.
The times are changed, and we with them indeed!
But ah! thank God, our love is not. But sing.

Change is for ever working round us here,
With hill and vale, with river, shore, and tree:
Nothing that is but unto Change doth veer,
But still, dear Friend, remain thou true to me:—
Unchanged in constant Change, be true to me.

The sky is mutable with light and shade;
A restless heart is beating in the sea:

But though all things from what they be should fade,
Still, still, I plead, remain thou true to me.
Unchanged in constant Change, be true to me.

Man's hopes and customs change with every clime;
To altered Faiths each Age doth bow the knee:
But Love's the same for all and every time,
And, in its name, remain thou true to me:
Unchanged in constant Change, be true to me.

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH.

(WRITTEN FOR RECITATION.)

The following lines were written for recitation on an incident of the Russian campaign under Napoleon in the winter of 1812. The young Prince Emilius, of Hesse Darmstadt, was one of Napoleon's allies, and had led to the field in his service a thousand of his own men. After the burning of Moscow he shared in the terrible retreat. Pursued by the Russians, they marched for days through the snow-drifted forests and plains, until of the thousand men ten alone remained. These lines are supposed to take up the story after the men have been wandering for days in the snow. Lord Houghton (whose beautiful verses on this subject are well known, but which do not lend themselves to the requirements of the reciter) gave me the facts of the story, having heard them, when a young man, from the lips of Prince Emilius himself.

ON in the snow—on in the snow—
Blinded and numbed, the soldiers go.
With footfall silenter than theirs
Death dogs their steps: and, unawares,

Strikes down his victims one by one,
Pursuit is distanced: doom begun.
Frost-bitten fingers, stiff with cold,
Seem frozen to the gun they hold.
The icicles hang on beard and hair;
The breath like smoke goes out in the air:
Till reason and thought begin to wane,
And only the dull, blind sense of pain,
And the instinct of Duty till Death, remain.
On in the snow—on in the snow—
The cruel, drifting, deadly snow,—
They march in silence, with muffled tread:
Till one of them stumbles,—and drops behind, dead!
And the others shudder, and glance around—
For they hear, growing nearer, an ominous sound
In the woods—the dismal howl
Of the wolves that after them stealthily prowl.
By open waste:—by dreary wood:—
By rivers black and frozen flood—
On in the snow—on in the snow—
Ever, with thinning ranks, they go.

The Prince Emilius looked on his band,
And his heart seemed like to break.

These were the men, who, for his sake,
Had left their Fatherland,
A thousand men in all,
To follow his bugle-call,
Three months before!—a thousand men:—
And of that thousand now he counted ten!

"Halt!" cried the Prince. The spectral band
Stood still, awaiting his command.
With tight-clenched hands Emilius stood.
Far off, a wolf howled in the wood:
And one lad, leaning on his comrade's arm,
Cried out he saw his home—the farm—
The sunny hill-slope, clothed with vine—
And heard the murmur of the Rhine!
He called his sweetheart's name, and then
Fell prone. And, looking on his men,
The Prince said,—"It is best we face
The truth. We shall not leave this place.
The end has come. God knoweth best.
To live we must have rest:—to rest
Is death. Together let us die.
See! yonder empty hut close by:—
Thither let us repair—and sleep.

Our slumber will be long and deep!
'Tis worse than useless, further strife!
You well have borne your part in life:
Bear it in death as well. On high
Perchance I'll rise to testify
To your unflinching loyalty.
My brothers! though we lay us down
Defeated, and without renown,
There we shall wear the Victor's crown."
Silent they stood, and silently they heard,
They could not answer: none could speak a word.
But when, "Is it agreed?" Emilius said,
Each man looked up at him, and bowed the head.

Then Prince Emilius went to every man,
Slim youth, or stern-browed veteran,
And kissed him, holding fast his hand:
He dared not speak lest he should be unmanned.
So, moving toward the hut, he pushed the door
Open; then looking on them all once more,
He flung himself upon the cold earth floor.
He heard the soldiers pause outside the hut,—
They came in slowly,—then the door was shut—
And all grew still and dark as death.

Soon as they heard the deep-drawn breath
Which told them Prince Emilius slept
(For they a wakeful watch had kept),
They all rose up, and softly crept
Up toward the sleeping man.
For even in the moment's span
Ere they came in, they'd laid their plan
In hurried whispers. Each began
To strip off coat and cloak : this done,
They placed them lightly, one by one,
Upon the young Prince lying there.
They shivered in the icy air;
But round and over him they laid
Their own warm clothes until they made
A covering that might frost defy.
Then they crept out, all silently :
And, in the snow, beneath that freezing sky,—
Some, hand in hand,—all clustered near the door—
They laid them down, and slept—to wake no more.

The long, still hours of sleep,
Silence, and darkness deep,
Seemed frozen into endless night.
Over the sky a cold, sad light

Had turned the world to death-like gray,
When the Prince woke. Another day!
Is it a dream? he looks around.
Alone!—He calls:—no answer—not a sound!
How has he lived through all the night?
And how withstood the deadly blight
Of frost as he lay there asleep.
What's this? He lies beneath a heap
Of cloaks and coats! In heart and limb
He feels new life. His senses swim,—
A sudden light breaks in on him;
He struggles up from off the floor;
He staggers quickly toward the door—
He bursts it open—rushes out—and lo!
The men, half naked, in the shroud-like snow.
In one swift glance he reads the truth, and then
The cry goes up,—"My men! my faithful men!"

Faithful, and not in vain! As if their thought
Its own fulfilment wrought
By sheer intensity and strength,
The rescue came at length.
French soldiers, ere the hour was gone,
Came past, and with them he went on.

For him thus saved the years to come
  Brought light and honour without stain;
And shouts of welcome brought him home
  In triumph to his own again.

Yet oft, in golden summer-time,
  In his own Rhineland, when his ears
Would catch the well-remembered chime
  Of bells he knew in boyhood's years:
Or from the hillside, clothed with vine,
He saw afar the sunlight shine
Upon the waters of the Rhine;
  His eyes would fill with sudden tears,
And he would see that hut that stood
Deep in the rugged Russian wood;
And, by the hut One, all in white,
Upon whose brows an aureole light
  Would from the skies descend;
  Who slowly o'er the earth would bend
And write upon the shroud-like snow:—
"For greater love no man can show
  Than lay his life down for his friend.

A FAREWELL.

(FOR RECITATION WITH MUSIC.)

HERE, where a year ago we met, Good-bye!
  Strange—that we part upon the very place,
Where, gazing on you, passionate and shy,
  I thought that Life looked at me through your face.

How I recall the ball-room's brilliant scene!
  Glitter of lights: the air with flowers made sweet:
The jewelled crowd 'mong which you moved, a queen:
  The pulse and rhythm of the dancing feet.

The memory of a valse is with me yet.
  It teaches me—though how I scarce can say—
The meaning of that strange, intense regret
  That underlies a valse, however gay.

You smiled, unconscious of the flash that burst
  From out that smile, and set my heart aglow:
And still you smile, serenely, as at first:—
  What shall I say?—are you unconscious now?

I know that I have built Love's prison well:
  But has sometimes no smothered song or cry
From Love, who maddened in his silent cell,
  Struck on your ears as you were passing by?

When we have laughed, I think you must have heard
  The sob that spoke of underlying tears.
And surely in the lightly-spoken word
  You caught a meaning, not for other ears.

But you did not!—you did not! Is it so?
  Well, well: if men will dream vain dreams, they must.
But it seems piteous we so seldom know
  The Dead Sea apples till they turn to dust.

Now, in your queenly way, you cross the room,
  To wish good fortune may my steps attend!
A year ago my heart burst into bloom
  At that sweet voice:—and now! is this the end?

"Yes: it was bright, that night a year ago.
  Do I remember it?—what need to tell?
What a good valse we had that evening!—So,
  You'll not return for years? Good-bye—Farewell."

Ah, you sweep on! and with the farewell breath
  You bandy words of courteous commonplace!
Well: now I know it was not Life, 'twas Death
  That looked that night upon me through your face.

Death, said I? do I talk of dying then?
  Folks do not die so. Oh no, I shall live:
Life's not the only thing in mortal men
  That has the gift of Death. "Hic jacets" give

A record of our last mortality:
  But all those unseen, unembodied things
That make life life, ah, these may die,
  And we live on: and who their requiem sings?

Ho! Life and Death set to a valse tune!—Yes:
  Smiles, we have oft been told, can rival sighs:
The thought is threadbare: true, though, none the less.
  There is a touch of death in all good-byes.

How you would laugh such "sentiment" to scorn.
  I do not so: believing, without doubt,
The things that move our lives are sometimes born
  From that same sentiment which you would flout.

The hardest, dullest life, if bared to light,
  Would show strange dramas: and would have to own
Its roots, perhaps, lay deep, far out of sight,
  In hopes and memories known to it alone.

Years hence, I dare say, none will guess or know
  The last year's history, its hopes and fears:
The first line that is traced upon the brow
  Makes little difference in a few short years!

Such lines are but dead Hope's faint signatures:
  No one can read them—scarcely we ourselves!
But those writ by a hand as soft as yours
  Hurt more than those which ruthless Nature delves.

A wise man said he knew no sadder sight
  Than a child crying o'er its broken toy.
A love dream:—is it not a thing as slight
  As any plaything made for childhood's joy?

A poor toy, broken by a touch too rough!
  A valse tune fits such childish woes to tell.
So—let it speak. Its pathos is enough.
  It sang our Greeting: now it breathes Farewell

A LEGEND OF CHERTSEY.

(Written for Recitation.)

In the days before the king had come again to take his own,
When the iron will of Cromwell filled the nation's empty throne,
One bright summer evening,—so the story runs,—in Chertsey town,
As the sun in clouds of glory through the west was sinking down,
There were standing by the churchyard gate an old man, bowed with care;
By his side a girl—the gold of sunset lighting up her hair.
"Master Noel," she was saying, "ah, you know as well as I,
Martin Riversdale, my lover, he to-night is doomed to die!

Doomed to die to-night, at sunset, when the curfew bell
is heard :
Cromwell's coming—he might stop the fatal sentence
with one word.
But he may not come till after they have fired the fatal
shot.
Curfew is the signal. Listen :—ah ! for pity, ring it not !
Wait at least a little : give us time—time till the General
come.
See, the people gathering yonder :—hark ! I hear the
muffled drum.
Wait—delay ! and I will bless you with my latest, dying
breath :
Every moment that we gain is weighted now with life
and death."

Then the sexton answered, sadly : "Ah ! you know not
what you ask.
For these forty years to ring that curfew bell hath been
my task.
Not a single night I've missed in all these strange,
eventful times.
Still my life hath wrought its fashion to that tower and
to those chimes.

I have known you from a child, dear: you and Martin: loved you too:
But a duty lies before me, and that duty I must do.
I am deaf, and old, and broken; and the sadder for this day:
I can scarcely hear your words, dear, but I know what you would say.
Let me face my duty bravely—face it—whatsoe'er it be!
Go, my child: no, leave me.—In this I am worse than deaf to thee."

Silent stands the girl: the sunset hides the pallor of her brow.
In her heart, heroic purpose quickens into action now.
In the morning she had heard the Judge the fatal sentence pass:—
"Martin Riversdale, 'tis proven that you worshipped at High Mass,
Held at daybreak on the Lord's Day, in the Chapel of the Hall:—
You refuse the names of those then present—popish traitors all!
Wherefore this the sentence is—that, when the curfew bell shall toll,

You'll be shot to-night, at sunset.—Heaven have mercy on
    your soul."
And she left the courthouse calmly, but with face a
    deadly white:
And she heard the townsfolk saying, "Martin will be
    shot to-night,
When they ring the bell at sundown," and had kept a
    silent tongue:
For her heart was whispering, "Courage! and that bell
    shall not be rung!"

She remembered how, in childhood, she and Martin
    oftentimes
Had climbed up the old, dark belfry, and had watched
    the ringing chimes:
For they loved the good old sexton, and he often let
    them play
Up and down the quaint old belfry, with its stairways
    dark and gray.
Well she knew their every turning, to the topmost dizzy
    stair:
Often she had climbed to gather wild flowers that had
    rooted there.

Now, in these faint, childish memories she a hope of
rescue saw:
Desperate! but at such a desperate time she clung to it
the more.

"Go, my child," the old man said. "Ah! would that
I could give you strength.
Though the day be ne'er so long it rings to evensong at
length.
Go, and pray: and close your ears, lest you should hear
the fatal bell,
And the volley that will echo it, with fiercer, deadlier knell.
You and he have often played about my knees, ah!
woe's the day!
Helped me open yonder door; cheered me with your
childish play!
Would that I had died before, and ne'er had seen this
morning's light!
I will lift my heart in prayer the while I ring that bell
to-night."

Then she left him: for a moment hid—then darted
toward the door:

Slid the bolt, and entered; she had loosed the wooden
bar before.
Like a ghost on the dark stairway, but with heart with
love made bold,
Up she mounts, past lancet windows, by the stairs she
knew of old.
On and upward—on and upward: in the darkness—not
a sound!
Higher—higher: dusty arches—slippery stairways, round
and round!
On she presses—on and upward—till she sees a ray of
light,—
Struggles on another moment, and then gains the top-
most height.
Through the windows of the belfry she can see the town
below;—
Houses, meadows, winding river, and the sunset's crimson
glow:—
On the buttress grows the wild flower: in a high and
dark recess
Hangs the fatal bell that soon will ring her lover's doom,
unless——
Ah! what is her thought? How can she stop its ring-
ing—make it dumb?

See! she watches, watches, watches, till the fatal moment
come!
Now—now!—see—the rope is moving! and the bell
begins to sway!
In a moment it will give voice, and all hope be swept away!
Courage!—one wild leap:—she grasps the bell:—it lifts
her off the ground:
To and fro it sways—but dumbly—for her hands have
hushed the sound.
Swinging, swinging:—meadows, houses, winding river,
sunset's glow
Swim before her as she hangs there, and the bell moves
to and fro!
Swinging, swinging:—hands are bleeding, sense is failing
with the pain:—
Still she clings, and still she clings on, clinging still with
might and main!
And the sexton, deaf, and with his heart absorbed in
prayer, below
Pulls the rope, nor hears, nor cares to hear, its answering
note of woe!

Lo! the swinging lessened—ceased! She slipped, with
sobbings, to the floor,

Where, a happy child, she oft had played with Martin
years before !
There she lay, half dead, and fainting ; whilst low down
the western sky,
Like a fire the broad sun blazed : and in the prison-yard,
hard by,
Stood her lover, ready, waiting for the curfew bell to
sound :
Whilst the poor, half-frightened people, pale and trem-
bling, gathered round.
There they waited, still expectant. Some have gone
toward the church tower,
Wondering why the curfew still delays to ring the sunset
hour :—
When—in silence—hark ! a distant bugle peals across
the land :—
Up the street a man comes spurring,—"Cromwell !
Cromwell is at hand !"
And the girl, who down the belfry stairs had crept, and
reached the gate,
Heard the shout, and hurried onward, lest her prayer
should come too late.
And, before 'twas found the sexton deemed that he had
rung the bell,

She was at the feet of Cromwell—there she pleaded long
and well :—
There she showed her trembling hands, by the iron and
woodwork torn :—
Told how Martin only bore the Faith his fathers long
had borne :—
Prayed for pardon :—spoke of Mercy, Mercy that is
throned above :—
Pleaded with the noble and heart-moving eloquence of
Love :—
Till the iron heart was melted. "Let his life," he said,
"be spared !
Love must greatly claim our reverence, when thus greatly
hath it dared.
Almost seems the sun to answer, and delay its course
to-night :
Let no curfew ring its setting, for we do not miss its
light
When such faithfulness is shining in our midst with
goodly ray.
You have saved your lover's life : go—seek him : tell
him what I say :—
Let him give his life in answer—and give both to God
this day !

On to Chertsey. Let us enter with a psalm upon our lip;
Finding in this deed of love, which all can honour, fellowship.
Tell the story to your children: and their children still shall tell
How the Maiden conquered Time, and hushed the ringing of the Bell."

THE HOUR BEFORE THE DAWN.[1]

(For Recitation with Music.)

Scene, a room, dimly lighted with a shaded lamp. Flowers on the tables. A large bow-window, with the curtains drawn. A piano, with sheets of music piled upon it. In an arm-chair a young man is seated. At his side stands his mother, with her hand upon his shoulder. He turns to her, kisses her hand, and says :—

Leave me, dear mother : go—and have no fear.
    I shall be happy here until the morn,
Nor want for aught. You see the bell is near.
    Go, rest : you look so pale,—so tired and worn !
Leave me awhile : I like to be alone.
    Put back the lamp :—and let the blind be drawn

[1] I am indebted for the leading idea of these lines to Mr. A. F. Westmacott.

Aside :—With stars the skies are sown.
Open the window. Place those flowers near.
Mother, your love has never seemed so dear.
Good-night. Yes—leave me, mother, till the dawn.

She goes. I hear the faltering footsteps stay
Outside the door, as loth to pass away.
She longs to stay beside me all the night.
'Tis late already: for the lamp's dim light
Has flickered low: and in the east afar,
Surely that star must be the morning star.
But all the world seems very still and calm.
No earliest bird pipes yet its matin psalm.
The air is breathless! not a leaf astir!
The tenderest chords of sense grow tenderer
At such an hour: and influences wake
That sleep by day. They rule the night, and make
An hour like this their own. The eye and ear
Strain for some sound of moving life around:—
The world is sleeping both to sight and sound.

The perfume of a hundred dew-drenched flowers
Hangs in the air. From the far Abbey towers

The quarters chime. I hear them clearly borne
Through the mute air. Is it so near the morn?
Three hours since midnight! Is the time so close
When the faint east will flush with gold and rose?
No sign as yet that night's veil is withdrawn!
It is that darkest hour before the dawn.

What is this restlessness that makes me fret,
And fills me with unspeakable regret?
Dear Art! my Better Self!—I turn to thee.
  Strengthen and calm me, as thou oft hast done.
For Failure thou hast naught of cruelty:
  Only for Fame and Praise that have been won
By degradation of thy majesty.
  Hast thou the scornful and rejecting hand.
Comfort thy weak, but not unfaithful son:
  Send me some message from thine Unseen Land.
Let me forget my petty griefs and strife,
And all the dark entanglements of life,
In thy eternal calm and loveliness.
  Pour light upon me. Let me hear
  The music of thy presence. Ah, draw near
And nearer as the world grows less and less.

I long to hear some chord, some note, some strain.
There's music here within me—and 'twere vain
To echo *that*—but yet I long to hear
The air vibrate with actual sound. 'Tis near—
The instrument!—I long to touch the keys;
And wake once more familiar harmonies.
The sound in this deep silence will gain power:
The time, the solemn spirit of the hour,
Will hallow every note to blessedness:
Till hearing, linked with memory, grow scarce less
Than worship; and the very heart be drawn
Upward and outward to the coming dawn.

'Twill wake my mother. Nay: if she's asleep,
Her wearied sleep will be too dense and deep.
If she be waking, she will hear the chords,
And they will summon her like spoken words.
Better: for in their message she will read,
The dawn is coming to my life indeed.
Weak! I am weak. I scarce can guide my limbs
  Toward the beloved instrument—though near.
The room looks strange and far away. It swims
  Before me as I move. Ah friend! so dear—

So loved! Again I touch the keys: my hands
Are feeble to obey my will's commands:
They wander into discords: but the song
Pours life into my veins, and I grow strong.
The joy is almost more than I can bear!
Music! ah, who thy message may declare,
The limits of thy sovereignty define,
Or prophesy the future that is thine?

Latest born of all the Arts,
Welcome to thy golden reign:
All the joy of youth is thine!
Earth in thee grows young again.
Tell us all we ever felt;
Every scene our life has known.
Sing to us: and let our hearts
Give the echo to each tone.
Music!—ah, the very word
Seems in fire and glory writ:
Crowned by poets, lit with love,
Heaven itself hath promised it.
Hearts that throb, and swell, and yearn
With a poetry that's mute:—
Lives that suffer:—thoughts that burn:—
Hopes that bud, but fail of fruit:—

Poems which are sung in silence,
  Unrecorded and unheard :—
Joys and dreams that have no answer :—
  Love that passes without word :—
Whispers from the worlds beyond us :—
  Echoes from the lives gone by :—
Voices of Life's eager questions :—
  Mysteries of Death's reply :—
Find an utterance and a meaning,
  Read a far off mystic sign,
Hear a promise of fulfilment,
  Music, in some voice of thine!

I see once more my Past from childhood's hour,
  The flattering dreams of triumph yet to be :
I feel again the young belief in power,
  The hope that called itself a prophecy.
Such hopes to natures that are strong and true
Are prophecies indeed and lead them on
To high endeavour and achievement too.
Whose was the fault then that those hopes but shone
So fitfully for me? What did I lose?
Where fail?—when called upon in life to choose.
Chose I a wrong path, or a hopeless aim?

Ah! shall I give my failure its right name?
'Tis here—in these hands that had no strength for strife,
No grasp upon the ruggedness of life :—
Here—on these feet that tripped at every stone,
And would not tread the path of work alone :—
Here—on the heart and brain that surely knew
The Artist's sympathy, and passion too,
To see and feel, but not the power to do!
These hands! and might they not the strength have
gained
To fight as all have fought who have attained
Prizes in life? who knows? Once in them lay
A hand, smaller and softer far than they :
Smaller and softer—yet it gave them strength
Such as might well have gained for them at length
The prizes they have missed without it. Yes :—
They found a purpose in that soft caress,
Lost soon as found. For though it was so much
To me, and nerved me with its very touch,
It found no answer in my clasping hand :
No answer it, at least, could understand,
Or cared to read. White hand, you were too sweet,
Too dainty far for mine. My pulses beat
Remembering you. I wonder, do you know

That they are beating for you, though so low?
What folly! Nay, white hand, to you 'twas naught—
A merest waft of girlhood's waking thought:
You're happy now, clasped in a loving hold.
There was no blame—the tale has oft been told;
What shall we call it?—a mistake—that's all:
Reality to one, and what you call
A dream, remembered with a smile almost,
Unto the other. Mistakes like that have cost
More than my life has in't to give ere this.
No blame! Love sometimes asks for one brief kiss,
Your life:—and passes on, without a sigh.
There is no blame; for, of a certainty,
There seems no choice:—we pay the price and die,
Knowing the cost! I do not blame—not I!
White hand, I love you still, and wish you well.
When you touched mine how could your heart foretell
The touch would wake the one chord that is true
To life in me?—'Twere mute still, save for you.
But for that waking, though the music be
The faintest echo of that melody,
That is to life as sunshine to the land,
I thank you and I love you, gentle hand!
The opening song was sweet beyond all words;

Rich as, in June, the carols of the birds
Fluted at sunrise, on a woodland lawn,
When all the world is flooded with the dawn!

The Dawn!—ah, see! The clouds have seen the sun,
And quicken into glory one by one.
A sense of wakening life is in the trees—
A flutter as of wings! Soft harmonies
Awake to answer those the eyes
Receive in colour from the flushing skies.
The old familiar scene looks new and strange,
As though I need had seen it truly. Change!
But in the eyes that look, not in the place.
Mother!—I'm glad you're here. Your well-loved face
It too has something in it strange and new.
Why did you come? I did not call for you—
But I am glad. You see I could not stand
Against temptation. Let me be—My hand
Clings to the keyboard. I am happy here,
Feeling that both of you, so loved, are near.
Place your arms round me: kiss me on the brow.
The sun is shining full upon us now.
So—let me play:—yes, yes—I will! I'm strong.
Would I could greet the Dawn with worthier song!

But 'tis the notes themselves—the very chords—
I love—They ease me more than any words.
Ah ! think not that I lack in reverence
At such a time. But I would go out hence
Hearing this voice of music, which I deem
The master-chord in life to me. 'Twould seem
A different revelation comes to each :
To every listening ear there is a speech
That comes to it with glory and a sign,
And best may spell for it the Name Divine :
And music seems the speech that speaks to mine.
If you should see her—tell her—tell her this,
That in my life the fairest memory is
The day I met her : and that, just before,—
Before—the Dawn (the sun shines more and more !)
I played the air she liked—the air I wrote
For her. Ah ! how I stumble at each note !
My fingers seek the melody in vain :—
'Tis gone—ah no—I have it now again.
Say now the words you taught me at your knee :
They touch the very heart of Melody.
These sounds of mine will soon in silence sink :
Their music will not ever cease, I think.

THE LOVER.

ABATE, O nightingale, thy passionate lay,
Or by a voice it will be put to shame :—
Fade, stars ; or soon your lustre will give way
Before a glance in which the heart takes flame.

I scarcely heed the beauty that I see ;
My heart is reigning even in my eyes :
And joyous Love arising, winged, and free,
Compels the earth, and treads the very skies.

The stars are nothing to me when I gaze
Into the heaven of that loving smile :—
You speak to me :—and never word of praise
Sweet Philomel can gain from me the while.

The Beauty round me, howsoe'er intense,
  Seems but fit setting for Love's rich delight:
A part of joy so high that every sense
  Must be fulfilled to enter on that height.

Sing, nightingales! Be minstrels to our Feast:
  Shine out, O stars! as torches to our Throne:—
Come, Earth, from North to South, from West and East,
  And Love shall make your Beauty all his own.

IN ILLNESS.

OVER and over and over again,
In and out, and about, the brain,
All the day long, all the day long,
Something has sung me an unknown song.
Is there anything near me, afloat in the air?
Is there anything standing behind my chair;—
And is that its breath at the roots of my hair?
I have heard that the gleam of the Crotalus' eyes
Works such wicked and baleful sorceries,
That its victim, bewitched and with freezing breath
Stands waiting the rattle and poison of death;
Whilst with flattening head, the accursed thing
Unwindeth its coils for the fatal spring.
So seem I to wait:—whilst all through the brain,
Over, and over, and over again,
Windeth that strange and mysterious strain,

Windeth and coileth, till every sense
Seems drawn to the utmost, quivering, tense,
Drawn by the magnet-like spell of the song,
Drawn into listening all the day long.—

It comes with whispers and murmurings,
With the trampling of feet, and the beating of wings,
And a sense of the approach of invisible things,
With splendours that grow from, and sink into gloom,
With the glare of a crisis, and the shade of a doom ;—
It fills me with grief lest its rhythm should die
Ere I fashion the shape of its melody :—
Now seems it to swell, and grow higher and higher,
With a roar and a crash, like a wind-angered fire ;
Till I, knowing it coming, and hearing it come,
Could scream, were I held not passive and dumb :—
And now with a sudden plunge and sigh,
It dives in the wells of memory ;
And where the sad waters lie darkling in night,
It shoots cruel shafts of irreverent light ;
Till faces forgotten, and happier years,
Youth's joys and mistakes, dead Hopes and Fears,
Drowned deep in regret, and bitter with tears,
Seem to stir into something like life again,

At the incantation of that refrain ;—
Till my eyes are brimming, and all grows dim,
As the cadence of that mysterious hymn
Falleth and riseth with the breast,
Riseth and falleth, and will not rest,
But winds through the heart and coils round the brain,
Over and over and over again.

Yet I know that the room is silent all:
For a denser stillness begins to fall,
As the gloomy twilight, drenched in rain,
Is darkened, and drawn from the window-pane.
The fire, whose vivid and comforting glow
Has cheered me, is glimmering, fitful and low;
So dull that the shadowy walls of the room
Have vanished beyond the contracting gloom.
There is not a sound, save, now and again,
A desolate plash from the falling rain;
A bell that is tolling far away;
And a cinder that clinks as it turns to gray.

And here I sit in the great armchair,
And in me, and round me, everywhere,
With a growing sense of crisis and pain,

Over and over and over again,
In the same mysterious time and tone,
Repeated, and yet never known,
Just as I've heard it all day long,
I can feel the swing of that terrible song.

I wish that some one would come in to me :
The sound of a cheery voice, maybe
Would somehow set things all aright.
I wish that some one would come with a light.
I shall madden here alone, in the dark,
Whilst the fire is fading out, spark by spark,
Till the last red flame gives its dying start,
And sinks back dull and faint and dead ;
And that evil song is still at my heart,
And coiling itself about my head,
Winding in and about the brain,
Over and over and over again.

* * * * *

A DEAD LOVE'S OBSEQUIES.

CHOOSE me a lonely and desolate spot,
  Bitter with blight, and canker accurst;
Where human footstep echoes not,
  And untamed Nature worketh her worst.
Let the toad croak loud, and the snake slip by,
  While the raven flappeth his wing above :—
And straightway I to that place will hie,
  For such is the place for thy burial, Love.

Choose me a dark and terrible night,
  When Death is about i' the murky air:
When children shriek in their sleep for fright,
  And strong men cross themselves in prayer:
Let the wind wail loud over city and kirk,
  And the thunderbolt crash from the cloud above;
And then I will get me straight to my work,
  For such is the time for thy burial, Love.

And choose you a funeral garment to wear,
  And write me a fitting funeral song,
For you must be Priest and Mourner there,
  And chant me a psalm as we go along.
And why? The Love I shall bury that night,
  Is the corpse of the Love you gave to me:
'Tis meet that I bury it deep out of sight,
  And 'tis meet that you should be by to see.

For thus, as whilst yet it lived, its face
  To us, to us twain only, was known;
So now it is dead, its resting-place
  Shall be known to none but us alone.
And the place is here, and the time is now:—
  Hush! Nay, it is useless to weep or rave!
I give you one last kiss on the brow.—
  My God! it is done. Let Love rot in its grave.

ALONE.

In the quiet summer evening,
You and I, beside the window,
Look upon the happy landscape;
Lonely, each; though hand in hand.

Boys are bathing in the river;
I can hear their joyous voices,
As they swim in lustrous water,
Round the golden meadowland.

From the hayfields, home-returning,
Troop the reapers by the waggon;
All the sounds of life and labour
Change to music in the air.

Far away, the bells are ringing :
Through the evening's dreamy splendour
They come pealing, with a pathos
That no language can declare.

Earth is very fair and joyous :
And to us the hour is blessed,—
Blessed in each other's presence,
And in thought of days gone by.

Yet I feel the hot tears rising ;
And in your eyes tears are shining ;—
But you cannot tell me wherefore,
Neither can I tell you why.

Unto you and me this moment
Speaks, no doubt, a different message ;
Speaks to each, for each one only,
What none else could understand.

I can only call you " Dearest !"
You can only say " I love you !"
All beyond is self and silence :—
Lonely, each : though hand in hand.

TO CALMNESS.

SING thou to me, my heart,
For I am vexed and weary:
Be psalmist to thyself,
Take up thy harp, and cheer me.
Sing unto me of calmness, fair and strong,
Until she come to me upon your song.

Why am I sad to-night?
Is it a thing so strange,
To see life's colours fade,
And find that friends can change?
That Will at times seems come to cope with Fate?
That he who longs to do, but learns to wait?

Calmness! oh me—that word
So often on our lips,

When lights that lead our lives
Are shadowed in eclipse!
Divinest calmness—come to me to-night,
And fill my spirit with thine equal light.

Ay, thou for whom my soul
Doth daily, hourly pray;
Oh hardest maid to win,
And soonest scared away—
Come! come and clasp me in thy cold, chaste arms:
Passionless, chant me thy strong-hearted psalms.

RE-UNITED.

Whilst you were far away, Life seemed
A restless slumber naught could break.
I did not live: I only dreamed:
But you return—and I awake!

Thrice welcome to the blessed day!
The sun is shining:—all is new!
The sun?—the morning, do I say?
The light I welcome shines from you.

Yes: like a dream from off my brain,
The motley days of Absence fly:
I wake.—I take up life again.—
Was it last night you said "Good-bye"?

THE day will come to us again ;
  The summer will return :
The frozen streamlet gush afresh
  Amidst the new-grown fern.
The fallow harvest-fields next year
  Their golden robes will don ;—
But ah ! the love you bore me once
  Is gone—is gone—is gone !

There's nothing—nothing in the world
  Can give it life again :
No bribe of joy, no gift of tears,
  No sacrifice of pain :—
Nor word, nor deed, nor prayer, nor threat,
  Nor smile, nor agony,
Nor life, nor death, nor heaven itself
  Can bring it back to me.

Ambition conquers oft defeat;
  Hope hath eternal breath:
Faith knows a more than Phœnix life;
  And Truth is freed from Death.
Our souls will live again when life
  Hath passed from earth away;
But ah! for love that once is dead
  There is no Easter Day.

Seed-time and harvest will return;
  Earth will retrieve her scars:
The day-time will renew his songs;
  The night regain her stars:
The sun will shine on us again
  As bright as e'er it shone:
But ah! the love you bore me once
  Is gone—is gone—is gone!

IN SORROW.

THE trivial incidents of every day
  Drive home the meaning of the mourner's loss:
We trip upon a briar in the way,
  And thereon feel how heavy is the cross.

The strongest recollections seem to lie,
  Like latent music, in the commonest things:
We put our hand upon them, passing by,
  And rudely touch the unsuspected strings.

And lo! there rises up an awful song—
  The passion and the pathos of dead years!
Harmonious minors, sweeping full and strong,
  And sapping all our strength with rush of tears.

ROUGE ET NOIR.

(WRITTEN FOR RECITATION.)

I HAD lost all night, with ill-fortune so strange,
That I said with each venture, "The luck will change."
Every night, as you know, has repeated the tale:
The fever that heightens, the hopes that fail.
I tell you my all was placed on the stake.
Well—I lost. And I knew that the morning would break
On my hopeless ruin, disgrace, despair,
Unless Fortune changed. And, bribed by what prayer,
Or compelled by what curse, would she deign to show
One glimpse of the light that a year ago
Led me on and on with such certain flame,
Till it changed in one hour to darkness and shame?

I played on: till the bells from the church tolled four.
Then I knew,—though I saw of the dawn no more

Than here and there through a curtain's fold
A narrow streak of luminous gold,—
That the latest gleam of the morning star
Had gone out in the rose of the east afar.
And I thought that a shame seemed to pass o'er the room:
And the lights grew more sickly, and denser the gloom;
And the people looked strange; and I scarce knew my face
In the mirror beside, as I turned from my place
To a sofa, and sank on its cushions, and lay,
And thought that my senses were falling away.
Fritz passed me and spoke, but my tongue seemed tied.
Then he drew the dark velvet curtains aside,
Flung the lace from the window, and opened it wide.
And with holiness far above insult or taint,
Like the glory that haloes the face of a saint,
Heavenly, pure, unsullied, bright,
Flowed in a blue flood of morning light.
The air was cool as mountain rills,
And fresh with the odours of meadows and hills:
On my forehead it blew, and it lifted my hair;
(I thought that *her* fingers were wandering there.)
And I felt a waft of the unstained joy

That I used to feel, when, a light-hearted boy,
I would wake on just such a summer dawn,
And hear the thrush sing on the garden lawn;
And dream of how happy my life should be,
Whilst the sun rose over the distant sea.
And lo! even then, as I trembled and felt
My whole spirit burn, and begin to melt
In the morning's holy and ardent light,
A gloom and a fire passed over my sight.
For I heard, through the tumult and stir of the
room,
Those words of madness,—those words of doom,—
Those words that so bitterly well I knew,—
"Faites votre jeu, messieurs, faites votre jeu!"
And again I felt the blackening pall
Of their magic and glamour around me fall;
And again my better nature gives way
Before their irresistible sway;
As, with desperate calm, I again take my place,
For the last, last time, at the long green baize,
With the sense of a fiend, hue and cry, on my track,
And the whole world a-dazzle with red and black,
Whilst I mutter under my quickening breath,—
"You make your game now for life or death!"

There are pale faces round me, and eyes that glare;—
And the glitter of sconces that flicker and flare;—
There are shuddering wafts of the morning air;—
There is chinking of money here and there;—
A hush around, and a storm within;—
And the thought—Rouge? Noir?—"Rouge!" God! will it win?—
Then a moment that lies on the spirit like lead,
Till it burst like a thunderbolt over my head,
"Rouge perde!" and I stagger and fall like one dead.

Ah, yes: they tell me I fell with a scream.
It all seems now like some hideous dream.
But ah! no dream is the ruin I face,
In all its grim, cold commonplace!
No dream was the barrel pressed on my brow
When you came and snatched it away just now!
You say there is hope even yet; if I raise
My eyes, and work toward better days,
With "never too late"—and the rest of the phrase.
Ah! friend: do not let me blame or fret,—
Perhaps you are right,—but yet—and yet!—
My life rises up at me whilst I speak,

With a voice like the wind's, and the whirlwind's shriek
And no accents of Hope can I hear on its blast,
No voice but the voice of the pitiless past!
The irreparable past! with its bloodhound breath,
And with eyes that are keen as the eyes of death;—
That terrible monster of Frankenstein
That is made from a past and a nature like mine!
God help any man who tangles his life,
And slips from the plain highroads in the strife!
For whether he knowingly turns astray,
Or wanders in ignorance away,
The price must be paid—the end is the same:
And the higher the nature, the deeper the shame.
The men who keep to paths direct,
Whose ways are safe and circumspect,—
(God knows! they too may have had to atone
For slips that to none but themselves are known,
For the heart knows its bitterness alone),—
They never can know of the hopeless maze
That hedges the wanderer in lost ways;
That closes round him on every side;
Where any chance of return is denied;
Where choice of road there is none—there is none!
And whence there is no gate, no issue—but one!

Now, good-bye: yes, farewell: for our roads lie apart;—
You're my friend, my brother; worn here—"heart of
heart,"—
I can trust your love always. Now drink we a draught.
To the glad long ago—a last Brüderschaft!
So,—your arm pressing mine gives a life to the wine.
Now you must go your way—and I?—I will go mine.

A DREAM OF LIFE.

Lo! I see children round the firelight:
  Outside the night is still, and dark and deep:
Inside, although at times the glow is bright,
  Are sounds of those who sit in gloom and weep.

Some strain their eyes into the dark afar,
  Pressing pale faces on the breath-filmed glass:
Or ask the others if they see a star:
  Or say that ghostlike figures flit and pass.

One, creeping up to where the light is strong,
  Foldeth his arms about a little maid:
And one is trying hard to sing a song
  Pretending that he does not feel afraid.

Here, sits a child who rocks himself and cries:
  There, one hangs pictures o'er the window-pane:
These laugh and dance, with wild and startled eyes:
  Those mend their broken toys, that break again.

And outside all in utter darkness lies—
  No sound—no form—no message and no sign?
Only the silence of the far-off skies:
  And stars that through the darkness calmly shine.

SUNDAY EVENING.

THE sun is setting. By the churchyard stile,
Here on the upland, let me rest awhile.
The hour and place are beautiful to me
In seen delight and unseen memory.

The hill-slope faces westward : and the land,
Garden-like, stretches out on every hand,
And far across the meadows, golden green,
The spires of Oxford crown the lovely scene.

How the eye dwells on every landmark round !
And how the ear drinks in each pleasant sound !
Both sight and sound alike grow doubly fair,
Translated through the golden evening air.

'Tis but a few short years since here I stood,
Seeing the self-same field and hill and wood:
When, just as now, the sunset lingered low,
O'er Oxford's "crown of towers," and Isis' flow.

Often I hither walked on summer eves,
Or when October touched the yellowing leaves;
When days were drawn to longest span in June,
Or when snow shone beneath December's moon.

Dear and familiar is this twilight scene:—
That old stone tower: those yew trees, darkly green.
How well I knew the lane up which I came!
Nothing is changed, yet nothing is the same.

Nothing is changed: yet change is everywhere:—
All things the same: yet not the things they were:—
Pathetically different all appears
From this same scene as known in earlier years.

Where is the change? and what has taken flight?
Is it the loss of that mysterious light
Which surely once upon my pathway shone;
And which I woke one day to find was gone?

Gone !—when and where I cannot tell in truth :
Gone ! ere I felt it going, with my youth !
Leaving behind for evermore a sense
Of aching void, and cureless difference.

Ah ! most pathetic of all human woe :
Tritest of sorrow that this world doth know :
Foolish to others—but to us so sore—
That wild regret for days that are no more !

What, then, does all this yearning sadness mean ?
The touching beauty of this evening scene ?
There must be answer, which some day will come,
There must be answer, though earth seems so dumb.

Once, ere my life had asked, reply seemed clear :
Now that my life has asked, no voice I hear !
No voice that speaks with any certain trust ;
None, save the Love that hopes in spite of Dust.

None, more than this—the thought that haunts the brain—
And whispers that its breath is not in vain :—
That somewhere will the best our life hath known
Be brought again with joy unto its own :—

That as all light has one great heart of light,
So all the things that make life fair and bright,
And noble, spring from one Eternal Root
Of which they are the flower and the fruit.

Oh for the faith of childhood, when my eyes
Saw heaven with all its angels in the skies!
Ere yet unveiling life had shown its form,
Or Thought or Passion raised their earliest storm.

Moments like these a smile of scorn may bring
To those too wise, or dull, to feel their sting:
But unto many, from such moment's strife,
Are born the thoughts that mould their afterlife.

Heart-rending sorrows, Love's awaking kiss,
These teach us most what living really is:
The heart gives fuller wisdom than the brain:
And Reason learns of passion and of pain.

So unto such as I, these moments—weak
Although they seem to those who sift and seek,
And have the power their own clear thought to tell—
Have yet their meaning, and their use as well.

Surely the tears with which my eyes are wet
Are made of something more than mere regret:
Rise from the heart's least desecrated source,
And not without some blessing take their course.

Hark! they are singing in the church. The hymn
Peals through the open doorway, dark and dim:
And it fulfils with more than speaking power
The loveliness and meaning of the hour.

Ah! let me join, although with alien voice,
In that sweet hymn, that, sung by happy boys,
Where thro' the chancel steals the sun's last ray,
Touches me more than any words can say.

For such the hymn that whilst I yet was young
In school and college chapel oft I sung:
It comforted my father's wearied ears;
And it is hallowed by my mother's tears.

Abide with me: fast falls the eventide—
To-night the well-known words seem glorified:
Embodying more, and with a voice more fine,
My inmost need, than any words of mine.

Rough were the hand such thoughts would sweep away;
Shallow the heart that did not feel their sway:
And he for whom no memories haunt the words
Is deaf to one of life's most tender chords.

O well-loved scene! Ah, lovely summer night!
What is your message? Who shall read aright?
I cannot hear: for life has dulled my ears:
I cannot read; my eyes are full of tears.

Here let me kneel, and turn me to the West,
For doubt and yearning hold my struggling breast:
And I, in reverence, would place my hand
On what the wisest cannot understand.

Hushed is the hymn: and as I westward gaze
The sun withdraws the latest of his rays.
The rooks stream home. The church clock gives the
hour.
The far-off city answers. Spire and tower

Take up the tale. The air-wave on its swell
Brings silvery chimes, and many a deep-toned bell.
Now all is still again. The golden glow
Is fading as I reach the lane below.

THOU aw'st my soul, O Nature, most
When thou art robed in flowers:
The song I least am nerved to hear
Thou sing'st in summer hours.

The Ages pass: and never mark
Upon thy brows they set;
I see no memories in thine eyes:
Thy voice knows no regret.

I fear Thee when, 'mid blight and death,
Thou tak'st a ruthless way:
But ah! my soul grows dumb with awe
To hear thee laugh at play.

A SUMMER NIGHT.

LISTEN and look! How beautiful it is!
  So calm, the moon alone appears to move.
The year will know no sweeter hour than this:
  It seems to catch the spirit of our love.

The stars will hardly triumph o'er the West
  Before the East disputes their quiet reign:
The last bird scarce have fluttered to its rest,
  Before the earliest wakes to song again.

And as heart beats to heart, and hand clasps hand,
  A godlike sympathy to us is given,
With everything that lives in sea and land,
  And everything that loves in earth and heaven.

A STORM.

THERE is a tumult in the sea to-night!
  I see the sheeted foam flash ghastly-pale:
Whilst flakes of foam and wreaths of sea-weed dank
  Fly past me, as I lean against the gale.
The gulls are screaming in the crannied cliffs:
  And angry voices rise, that speak to me
Of giant boulder, bedded rock, and sand,
  Wrestling in agony against the sea.

There is a tumult in my heart to-night!
  The sea of passion, white with inward strife,
Uplifts its waves, and madly beat the rocks
  Where lie the very roots of Love and Life.
Its Titan strength besieges all my heart;
  Whence issue voices wild, that speak to me
Of grappling Will, Endeavour and Resolve,
  Wrestling in agony against the sea.

Shriek, winds; and hurl the vast Atlantic waves
  In thunderpeals against the granite wall:
The throned rocks, unmoved, will face the dawn,
  And from their iron seats defy you all.
God! will the dawn behold my Will rock-firm
  From out the stress of this tumultuous fray?—
Or lying drowned in wells of deep defeat,—
  Pounded to dust—clean gone—and washed away?

AN IMPRESSION.

THE dusk of a dull November day :—
  A quiet London square :—
A line of gas-lamps in the gray,
  Blurred with the smoky air :—

A narrow strip of sunset sky,
  Seen through a leafless tree :—
The hum and drone of the streets near by,
  Like the voice of a distant sea.

And as I counted the clock strike five,
  And sat by the fire in my chair,
An old street organ began to give
  Its voice to the quiet square.

'Twas a well-known melody from one
  Of Verdi's operas ;
Where you feel the warmth of a southern sun,
  And the glow of the southern stars.

Alas! to be worthy a poet's rhyme,
  And to have its touch of romance,
It should have been on the "castled Rhine,"
  Or some old-world town of France.

It should have been my lady's song
  In an old oak-panelled hall :
Or the strain from a gondola floating along :
  Or the hymn from a convent wall.

But dull were the things I saw and heard :—
  Yet it was not these alone :—
For a pathos for which I have no word
  Had made them all its own.

I had held my sorrow from giving way
  Through months of pent-up care :
But the song in the dusk of that wintry day
  Mastered me then and there.

NEW YEAR'S NIGHT.

JUST as I gained my doorstep in the snow,
   And paused a moment, looking toward the sky,
The stroke of midnight sounded, solemn, slow;
   And bells began to ring out merrily.

And suddenly I saw the well-known place
   With other eyes,—the same, yet not the same!
The whole world changed before my very face
   With change that knows no form, and has no name.

Something ne'er seen before rose into sight;
   Something, to come back never, went out hence:
Yet nothing warned me that that New Year's night
   Would touch my life with such strange difference.

I heard the bells go ringing, far and near;
  Over the way the rooms were brightly lit;
A window was thrown open wide to hear;
  Across the light I saw dark shadows flit:—

Above, the frosty stars were sparkling keen;
  The wheel-ruts furrowed the discoloured snow:—
There was no inch of the familiar scene,
  No sound or echo, that I did not know.

Yet all was seen and heard for the first time;
  Almost by one new-born, as it might be:—
Many New Years since then have rung the chime;
  But that New Year has never ceased for me.

IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

TIME, who unmakes us all, hath made thee strong:
The Past is living still thine aisles among,

To tell in word, and symbolism high,
How much there is in life that cannot die.

The roar of London seems to beat on thee
Like waves from an advancing, rising sea

That beats upon a rock whose noble form
Speaks of the work of sunshine and of storm.

The Poetry of Worship in all Time,
The godward instinct of each age and clime,

Is writ in characters majestical
Upon thine hallowed and historic wall.

ON CHARLTON HILL.

I LOOKED to London when the light was low,
And watched the river as it curved away,
Fainter and fainter in the evening's gray,
To where St. Paul's loomed through the after-glow.
Midmost the stream a barge was drifting slow:
Some weeds were burning in the fields that lay
Across the water; and the flickering ray
Of flame gleamed fitful on the hurrying flow.
Dim through the smoke-drift burnt the evening star.
And as I stood and dreamed a moment there,
The world of our To-day seemed dull and vain:—
A longing seized me for new lands afar;—
A wish that Earth were once more young and fair,
And Pan were reinstated in his reign.

AT HAMPTON COURT.

Pathetic in its bygone stateliness,
   The Palace stands amidst its gardens fair:
The lawns are robed in summer's gaudiest dress;
   The fountains poise their rainbows in the air.
The river, 'neath the terrace-balustrade,
   Flows on its way, as silvery and serene,
As when King Charles lay dreaming in the shade,
   Or Marlborough talked of Blenheim to the Queen.
But—better than such memories—it brings
   A strange possession of the Past to us,
An insight into old, forgotten things,
   And days we knew not yet we know of thus.
The place is fine alike to heart and eye:—
By Nature blessed, and dowered by History.

APRIL.

No settled purpose holds these April days;
    But shine and shadow counterchange the hours.
The blurrs of Winter chill the sun's warm rays;
    And rainbows fleet across the fleeting show'rs.
Wooed by the blackbirds' rich antiphonies,
    Trees burst to leaf, and timid buds expand,
To face the anger of rebuking skies,
    And brave the wind's unkindly reprimand.
And thus it is with Youth in all its years:
    Harsh disillusion stands on every side;
Its blossoming thoughts are washed by sudden tears,
    And these by sunlit joys are glorified.
For Spring hath not the Summer's statelier calm:
And, having it, would lose its proper charm.

"GOOD IN EVERYTHING."

DARK pool, so thick with slime and rotted weed,
Dishonoured with the shame of stagnant rest,
Thou hast some beauty on thy face confessed.
The skies are mirrored there. Their light indeed
Is marred and darkened: yet who looks may read
On thee, as on a palimpsest,
The double writing that doth there attest
Thy lowest and thy highest. Is the creed
That says in vilest things we still may find
A hint of what is good,—that some faint light
To him that seeks it, shineth everywhere,—
Not one that builds itself on Nature's mind?
Look on this pool—what is it meets your sight?
Its own shame? or the blue skies mirrored there?

TO NATURE.

FROM all the turmoil and disquietude
    That fills our hurried life I turn away,
    Well-pleased to sit at Nature's feet and say,—
"Teach me the lessons of the hill and wood;
Mould me to understand thine every mood.
    Thy streams and forests never give us 'nay,'
    Nor shun to-morrow whom they love to-day:
There is no variance in their brotherhood.
  Tired am I, and dull with wasted years;
    Yet see me come, O Nature, to thy feet:—
      Ah! take me, Mother! calm and strengthen me;
  Rebuke me, cleanse my eyes with childlike tears:—
    That I, from work, and noise, and self-deceit,
      May rest awhile, forgetting all but thee."

THE LOVER'S SECRET.

"YELLOW-HAIRED maiden, so busy a-gleaning,
Why are you singing so blithely, I pray?
Have you discovered the spirit and meaning
Of all that is glad in the long summer day?"

"Yea: I have found it: but not to reveal it.
Need is there none I should give you the clue.
Nature, she taketh small pains to conceal it!
Ah, good my lad, is it hidden from you?"

"If that it be, it is surely your mission
Here to proclaim 'Lo, the path and the way!'
To say it will open to such a petition,
And such is the tribute its votaries pay."

"'Tis born of no sweetness in opening flower;
'Tis sung by no nightingale under the tree:
Nor, rainbow-like, comes it of sunshine or shower;
Nor told of wild winds that sweep in from the sea."

"Lives it in valleys? is't throned in the mountain?
Do stars up in heaven emblazon its name?
Who knoweth its source? or what eyes see its fountain?
And is it revealed in crystal or flame?"

"It walketh the world in Sweetness and Beauty;
Its feet are with courage and purity shod:
Unselfishness robes it: 'tis crowned of Duty:
And those who have seen it are conscious of God."

"I see it: I see it: though darkly and blindly!
It speaks in your voice, and its music is strong:
It shines in your eyes, and its splendour is kindly:—
The secret is mine:—I can join in your song."

AN IDLE DAY.

THE day is idle :—and idle am I !
  I care to do naught but lie and dream ;
As I gaze with half-closed eyes at the sky,
  And the diamond prisms that sparkle and beam
Over the top of the sand-hills high,
  Where the sails of the far-off vessels gleam.

Here could I lie all the happy day,
Content to dream the hours away !
Happy in knowing that you were by.
Whilst the wonder of open sea and sky,
And the sweet fresh scent of the ocean brine,
Revive my soul like bread and wine.
Our hearts are one with the sunlit scene ;
  With the sounds that fill the generous air ;
With the sea-weeds purple and brown and green ;
  With the delicate sand-flowers blooming there ;

With the pink and white shells that lie at our feet;
With the sail-flecked horizon, hazy with heat;
With the boats that swing in the purple bay;
And the freedom of Nature who laughs whilst she may
In the God-given joy of the Summer Day.

So here let us lie on the yellow sea-sand,
 Grasses, and shells and sea-weeds among.
We are monarchs of earth, and kings in the land,
 Though no sceptre be given, no pæan be sung!
For we've sunshine and air:—we lie, hand in hand;—
 We hope, and remember:—we breathe, and are young!

A LESSON.

Lo! every year, on Autumn's chilling breeze,
The Frost draws near to strip the branches clean
But still the infinitely hopeful trees,
The Winter gone, put on their robes of green.

Each year the miracle of Spring is wrought
As freshly as in Eden's primal bowers:
And raw December's reign is set at naught
By April's vernal rains, and May-time's flowers.

Hence let me learn from Disappointment's face
To turn aside with undespairing heart:—
Ready to meet fresh Hope with fitting grace,
And bear in any spring a timely part.

A NEW YEAR'S GREETING.

Here by the open window,
  On this sweet New Year's Day,
I'm striving hard to listen
  To what Earth has to say.
The air is mild and quiet,
  The ground is dark and soft,
The flood-tides of the river
  Gleam in the willow-croft.
All things are calm and pensive;
  And from the fir-woods there
The twitter of the robin
  Makes sweet the sleepy air.
O twinkling shrubs and hollies,
  O ferns in sheltered nook,
O hoarse, full-throated warblings
  Of yonder rain-filled brook,
Ye have a voice, a language,
  An untranslated speech:

And all my heart is yearning
  To learn what you can teach.
My life is not a-tuneful
  To your majestic keys;
My ears are all too fevered
  For your pure harmonies.
But, as I listen humbly,
  And try to understand,
A voice most sweet and solemn
  Comes up from off the land.
I cannot tell the message,
  Or what the voice I hear:—
It sings for all who listen—
  New songs for every ear!

TO MY BROTHER FRANK.

WHEN the heather's regal purple
Changes into dusty hue;
And the morning brambles glisten,
Filmed with webs asheen with dew:
When the bracken, brown and amber,
Glorifies the forest's gloom;
And the gossamers go sailing
Over moors of heath and broom:
When the distance grows more dreamy,
Soft with lines of golden haze;
Whilst the scent of mellowing apples
Fills the orchard's pleasant ways:
When the children go out nutting
Through the wood, and down the lane;
And the ricks are thatched and finished,
And the garners stored with grain:
When the lingering flowers seem fairer

From the sense of Winter near;
And regret for Summer faded
Makes the sunshine doubly dear:
Then the memories re-awaken
Of that sad and hallowed day
When your spirit, O my brother,
Passed from us and earth away.

There was once a time, my brother,
When you made the world to me;
When I could not dream of gladness
Separate from thoughts of thee.
To my childish hero-worship
You were monarch in the land:
Everything was safe and hopeful
When you held me by the hand.
Now the sense of separation
Seldom stirs me to the heart:
And I wonder to remember
How I thought we ne'er should part:
How I used to feel 'twere hopeless
To conceive what life would be
If its sorrows, joys, and dangers
Were not known and told to thee.

Ah, pathetic strange reversal!
    Sorrow's natural Nemesis!
Now 'twould seem as strange to see thee,
    As it once had seemed to miss!
Yet, although through dole or pleasure
    I may take my onward way,
Seeming but to feel the Present,
    And the friendships of To-day;
This I know,—your loss is written
    Over all my manhood's years:
Writ on plans that miss fulfilment,
    Writ in Failure's bitter tears:
Writ in deep and strong conviction
    That the only path for me,
Which can lead me on or upward,
    Is the path marked out by thee.
Thus my life, beloved brother,
    Or in Failure or Success,
Mourns in this your loss and silence,
    Feels in that your love's impress:
And in all its deepest feelings,
    All its little sum of good,
Answers to the recollections
    Of our deathless brotherhood.

Ah! the world is all too busy!
Present joys and present strife,
Drown, with Babel sound, the voices
That give dignity to life.
And amidst the press and hurry
Of these overcrowded times,
Nothing is so soon forgotten
As the sound of funeral chimes.
In some hearts, unseen by any,
Silent sorrow may abide;
But the world compels our faces,
And puts memory aside.
Each hour brings its claim upon us,
Every day new faces throng,
All day long life's hurrying currents
Bear us ruthlessly along.
There seems little pause or leisure
To remember, or to think.
Recollection, contemplation,
These, with all their issues, sink
Out of sight amid the turmoil:—
So much poorer, we, of heart!
We are cumbered with much serving,
And we lose the better part.

Therefore I am glad September
Comes each year my path across,
To recall the old affection,
And remind me of my loss.
Therefore 'tis its pensive beauty
Hath for me a voice divine,
Brings to me a special message,
Comes with glory and a sign.
May the golden days of Autumn
Always through the passing years
Re-create this sweet sad sorrow,
And revive these hallowing tears.
Let them never cease to call me
For a while from noise and strife,
To a silent contemplation
Of his pure and blameless life:
Life he seemed to make heroic,
Though a life shut in from praise,
Simply by the way he lived it,
And the fashion of its days:
Of a path, which, spite of weakness,
Bravely to the end he trod:
Of his calm belief in patience;
And his simple faith in God.

TO A FRIEND.

LIGHT and Peace be with you ever!
Clearness, strength, and high endeavour,
Will that works, and falters never,
        Lead you upward into Light!
Life may give to thee her treasures,
Flowers, and songs, and heaped-up pleasures,
Foaming cups and brimming measures,
        Hopes that sparkle in their flight:
Friends may cheer the way before thee;
Love may sing the old, old story;
Art display to thee her glory:
        Fair success her laurelled height:
May you then have strength in choosing;
Joy in seeing, and in using;
Joy that brings no after losing,
        Holds no subtle taint of blight.

But should sorrow come anear thee ;
And few friendly voices cheer thee ;
And your heart grow faint and weary
At the daily fret and fight ;
If thy Faith, by struggle broken,
Fail of any certain token
That a Master voice hath spoken,
Or of what may be the Right ;
May you then hold fast the powers
That you've owned, in calmest hours,
Seem to make this life of ours
Most heroic and most bright.
Let no siren-voice uproot thee
From the faith that highest Beauty
Lies in doing simplest Duty
Even in your own despite.
Views may change as life advances ;
Present faiths grow future fancies ;
Youthful hopes and young romances
May grow faint, or vanish quite ;
But through all things transitory,
May some fair Ideal of glory,
Some high Purpose, shine before thee,
Cloud by day, and fire by night :

Keep your faith to that unshaken ;
And, whatever path be taken,
Be you followed or forsaken,
On your life's page it will write
That New Name, mysterious, splendid,
That awaits, when life is ended,
Those whose knees are not found bended
To things seen, or Mammon's might.
Now our paths seem bound for ever :
But, it may be, life's endeavour
Widely may our footsteps sever,
'Mid the tumult of the fight :
But or whether near, or parted,
Still our love shall live, true-hearted.
In life's morning it was started
May it last till it be night !

A MOMENT OF FAIRYLAND.

A COTTAGE, and its garden plot,
Bosomed in deep, ambrosial wood :—
Flower and fruit, despising not
A sweet unenvious brotherhood :—
A scent of currant-bush and box,
Hot with the summer :—everywhere,
A blaze of blossom :—and bright flocks
Of butterflies in sunlit air :—
A little fairyland it seemed !
And Queen of all, by fairy lore,
A girl, where light thro' foliage gleamed,
Sat singing by the cottage door.

The air was full of glittering wings,
And all alive with pleasant sound ;
Leaf-shadows lay, in quivering rings,
That danced and flickered on the ground

The honeysuckles overhead
  Swayed in the draughts of scented air:
And foxglove spires, white and red,
  Grew either side the broken stair
That sloped to where the chestnuts made
  Their branches roof a mossy dell,
Where ferns were growing in the shade,
  And water dripped adown a well.

The maiden sang: happy and strong,
  The sweet young voice rose heavenward:—
It was a simple, homely song,
  But touched some true and perfect chord.
It seemed the poem of the place—
  At one with all the summer day!
It, and the maiden's upturned face,
  Answered the sunshine every way.
Once she looked round: I thought she saw
  My shadow as I passed along:—
But no! she dreamed on, as before—
  The dream that floated on the song.

I felt myself some youthful prince,
  With plumed brow, and belted thigh:

A hundred fairy tales, long since
  Forgotten, flashed to memory.
Many a sylvan form and elf
  Peeped from rich bloom and leafy tree :
And Puck, and Ariel herself
  Came riding on a bumble-bee.
That was the Maiden of the Wood :—
  My boyhood's wonderland was found !
And as beneath those trees I stood,
  I felt it was enchanted ground !

I heard a voice within call loud ;
  The maiden rose and went inside :—
The light was shut off by a cloud :—
  The colour paled :—the sunlight died !
'Twas only for a moment's space,
  That I beheld that woodland dell,
And looked upon that Maiden's face ;
  But yet—though how, I cannot tell,—
I touched on Fairyland that day,
  Just for one moment—am I wrong ?—
A flash ! It came, and passed away,
  Upon a smile, and in a song.

AT THE ALTAR-STEPS.

Our life has been unfruitful, vain ;
Not dedicate to Thee :—
We have not laboured for Thy Reign :—
Unworthy servants, we !

The first-fruits of our days were not
Upon Thine altar placed ;
But plucked, and thrown aside to rot
In Youth's ungarnered waste.

And Thou hast seen us dancing round
The golden calves of earth ;
Not staying for the thunder's sound
Our thoughtless songs of mirth.

Yea : with great Sinai all aflame
With judgments of the years,
We have but veiled our eyes with shame,
And dulled with sin our ears.

And is it now too late, good Lord?
Must we expect Thy frown?
And is there only now the sword,
For us, who scorned the crown?

Ah! but Thy mercy it is great,
Broad as the steadfast heaven:
It cannot ever be too late
As long as hope is given.

Thy Name of Father we can trust;
Trust what its meanings tell:
For like a line of light 'tis thrust
Athwart the glooms of hell.

Our lips are ignorant of prayer;
Our knees are stiff with pride:
But here—upon Thy lowest stair—
We plead the Crucified.

Fumes rich and rank from Sin's hot night
Are steaming round us still;
And many a phantom poison-light
Still stars the realms of Ill;—

Still are we prone to blind our eyes,
And grovel in the mud;
And Will is lame to exorcise
The devil in the blood.

We fall, and fall: but Thou art strong;
Thy Pity will not pause:—
And if Thou seest all the Wrong,
Thou knowest all the Cause!

Oppressed, and torn a hundred ways;
Awed with life's mysteries;
Blinded with straining eager gaze,
Into unanswering skies;

Ay,—spent with battling unseen Powers;
We turn us back at length
To That which wiser heads than ours
Have found was Light and Strength.

So, like young children saying prayers
Beside the mother's knee,
We kneel us at Thine altar-stairs,
And lift our hands to Thee.

O, YET the birds in vale and wood are singing joyous
trills ;
The rains refresh the meadow lawns; the sunshine
warms the hills ;—

The sunset and the dawn still come to glorify the sky ;
The lilies by the waterside are blooming peacefully :—

The children going down the lane, sing out, and shout
for glee ;
And nothing seems to miss the life that was the world
to me.

High up, the twittering swallows skim the air with
happy flight ;
Like crimson flames they flicker as they turn athwart
the light.

Age comes to mar youth's godlike grace ;
It draws strange lines about the face :
Life dwindles into narrow ways ;
And silence cometh on apace.

And so we come to chiefly bless,
And seek for, sleep—forgetfulness :—
Forgetfulness of Life's mistake :
Of hearts worn all too tough to break :

Of proud, strong Youth : and Happiness :
Of what the world calls our Success :
And of the Memories that are known
To us—ah me !—to us alone.

IN THE GREEN-ROOM. 185–.

LET us walk in, and have a word or two.
The Green-room :—ah ! you know it, sir, I see.
Once it was thronged by sprightly wits and beaux
Or so, at least, the older actors say.
Now 'tis but seldom used : its day is past.
Last week 'twas given up to "properties :"
But it is tidy now. Shall we sit down ?
You are a friend, sir, of the management.
I'm glad to know you. We but seldom have
The honour of a visitor—of one,
At least, I care to see—behind the scenes.
No, I have time enough. I am not on
In this Act or the next :—a tedious part
That opens famously, and makes its mark,

Then disappears, and is forgotten flat:
And then turns up again, just at the last,
And people ask, "Why, who on earth is this?
Oh yes, of course; that man in Act the first.
We had forgotten him." A part I hate.
Hard work, and small effects, with tedious waits.
Not tedious though to-night, and thanks to you.

But the part fits me, now I come to think.
Hard work, and small effects, with tedious waits!
Waits, sure enough, more than enough of them.
I've waited now for years, I think, for what?
Well, many things: perhaps to play King Lear,
George Barnwell, Romeo, or Doricourt:—
Perhaps to save enough, sir, to retire,
And hoe the cabbages and celery
In some suburban cottage,—happy end!
Perhaps—perhaps—who knows the foolish things
I may have waited for—ay, wait for still!
I scarcely know myself; and would not tell
Even to that long looking-glass (that's seen,
No doubt, so much of life! and which to-night
Would make believe that I am old and gray!
This is a wig, you see: I wear it thus:

My own hair at the sides here works in well,
And makes it very natural, does it not?)
Not even to that glass would I tell the things
I've waited for—so long that waiting is
The thing itself—for it, the thing is gone:
But still the waiting, in itself a hope,
Remains. And that is something in a world
Where hopes, and salaries, are few, and small.

I jest, you see: a little. Well, one must, I think.
We players are a merry race, they say.
"Merry and careless" is the character
That we are labelled with by other folks.
We wear the label, sir, most patiently.
"Hard work, with small effects, and tedious waits,"
Is sometimes written on the other side.
But that side we keep downwards, as is best,
Read only of each other and ourselves:
Save when a hand more kindly than most hands—
(More clever, say; for many hands are kind.)
Lifts it, and reads: and then we take that hand,
And, being weak, hysterical perhaps,
By nature—merriment and carelessness
Turned inside out, you know—we press it—so.

To-morrow morning? Yes: at twelve o'clock.
You'll come and see me then: why, that is brave.
Ev'n as the dial verges nigh to noon
I shall await you at the outer gates.
Forgive the actor, sir, his trick of speech,
Caught from the melodramas of his youth.
I knew an actor once who always spoke
In grandiose, colloquial, mock blank-verse:
A merry fellow with a dismal face!
The expectation of a visitor
Is as unusual as the hour, alas!
The midnight twelve is oftener my time,
For entertainment: and the place—your ear!—
The parlour of the Swan. Ah! you are shocked.
Not shocked! And you will meet me there? 'Tis well.

Yes, I've played many parts, sir, in my time.
I've played a demon in a Pantomime:
A lovely thing, sir, to have done, you'll own.
I've ranged from Hamlet to A Voice Outside.
We'll have a laugh at many an episode
That I can tell you,—if you care to hear.

Born on the stage, sir, as the actors say.
My father was an actor. As I lay,
Rocked in the cradle at my mother's feet,
The coverlet I slept so warm beneath
Was Lady Anne's black cotton velvet robe ;—
(Her favourite part.)—The earliest words I heard,
The "Gentle Jesus" of good Doctor Watts,—
"Now is the winter of our discontent,"—
And "absolutely for the last two nights."

A little dingy lodging in a street
That led from out an old cathedral close
Is my first recollection of a home.
But we were Arabs, and we pitched our tent
In many places. In those days, you know,
There were the Circuits, as they called them then,
For the best theatres in the provinces.
My father and my mother well were known
Throughout the Norwich Circuit : and for years
They played in all the towns about, and dreamed
Of London as a dream too bright and high
For real fulfilment. But they were content.
The scheme of theatres and professional life
Is changed : I speak of times quite passed away.

They had their little social circles then,
Nice, quiet, homely folk: and for their art,
I'm minded to believe they knew it, sir,
Far better than our actors know theirs now.
But let that pass. The new school always smiles
Over the fond traditions of the old.
No one can quite decide—opinions all!
And I have mine: and so we'll let that pass.

My mother. Ah, I still am but a child
At thought of her. She was an angel, sir.
She entertained the world, not the world her.
The world was singularly unaware.
But women far less talented than she
Have made a name,—whilst she—ah, well, poor dear!—
Her name is on a few old play-bills still;
(I have them in my box) and somewhere too
In that Great Book of Life where blameless lives
Are written, as she taught me at her knee.
I cannot speak about her very well.
Childhood still holds me when I think of her.
'Tis well, in such a life as mine has been
To have a corner where your manhood stops,

Drops down upon its stiffened knees awhile,
And says its "Gentle Jesus" like a child.
I talk too much. Your kindness leads me on.
Keep we our linen and our wool apart.
Look at this girl: she plays our Chambermaids.
Pretty?—a good girl, too. "God ye good den,"
Your scene just coming on? There! you are "called."
You'll see Bill Turner in a private box
Upon the prompt side. Ah! he's come to see
The local talent, and to find a "star"
For his next Pantomime: so now's your chance!
Laugh out your best. Her laugh, sir, is her forte.
You know this gentleman, my dear?—ah, so!
There: laugh like that, and Turner offers you
Your twenty pounds a week. Go in, and win.

A good girl:—did you notice how she laughed?
A pretty laugh—a very pretty laugh!
It moves me deeply, for—I weary you!
No?—well, I will talk. I'm garrulous to-night.
What was I saying? Oh, her laugh;—ah, yes:
I said it moved me, did I? Yes: of course:
Such laughter moves us all, you know.
The dullest audience fain must answer it.

I did not mean that? how do you know that?
You read between the lines!—an actor born!
Go on the stage: you'd prosper well, I'm sure.
A very good stage face and figure too.
You'd make a perfect County Paris now;
Charles Surface, too.—We'll see you on the boards.
Rub once against the wings, you're booked!

Her laugh?
It moves me; yes. For it reminds me, sir,
Of laughter I have heard. A silvery laugh,
That laughed me first to happiness, then scorn!
The old, old story? Yes, no doubt: though told,
As it is always told, as if the tale
Were heard then for the first and only time.
When will it tire of being told and heard?
Well, that would be the saddest day of all.
Come, old, old story; sung, or whispered low;
Given in laughter, or in silent gaze;
All ears are straining for you! even mine,
Dulled with the voices of my many years,
Under this wretched wig and feathered hat,
Still listen to your echoes; and confess
I would not lose them, though they hurt me so.

'Twas thirty years ago, at Christmas time:
Red Riding Hood: I was a youngster then,
Scarce twenty-two, and played the harlequin.
Can you be interested in the life,
The very human life and happiness,
Of this young harlequin? His limbs were strong
Beneath the spangles and the red and gold.
And all the passion of a heart that loves,
That loves, and hopes, and has its world to win,
Made the wild folly of the "comic scenes"
A drama that was beautiful to him.

"The short, but simple annals of the poor"
Doubtless read strangely to the rich and great.
The loves of harlequin and columbine
Are difficult to treat of seriously.
Were I elsewhere, or you—well, not yourself—
I should not try to do so. But this room,
My wig and paint perhaps, that massive cup
Of gilder plaister, with its paper flowers,
Befit the tale: and, stranger still to say,
Give it a life and make it natural.

My mother did not act when things went well

With me—at least not since my father's death :
And that same Christmas things went very well.
For I was what they call "a useful man"
Upon the stage. Old men, or youthful swains,
Comedy, Tragedy, Melodrama, Farce,
Ready for all and each was I, in turn.
A famous dancer, too. And, as it chanced,
Just as the Pantomime was well rehearsed,
Our harlequin falls ill. Catastrophe!
The management is in despair. I go:
And, for a rise of salary, consent
To fill the gap. And so, on Boxing night,
I leap with mask and bat upon the stage
A full-grown harlequin. You see I speak
About myself: 'tis easier. For, of Her
I find it hard to speak. 'Tis difficult
To tell a tale if different points of view
Are seen: some plainlier than your own.
Then I was blind to all save what I felt.
Now I can see, and, seeing, I grow dumb.
I was to blame. Yet telling all the tale
'Twould seem the telling gave some sort of blame
To her, although I blamed myself alone.

Think of us not in spangles and in gauze,
But in a cloth coat and a simple gown:
Yes, it was simple then, in those old days.
Ah! we were happy! and she laughed a laugh
That laughed away all reason and all thought.
My mother went upon the stage again.
The old black velvet robe of Lady Anne,—
Ah, God forgive me!—it was trimmed afresh.
She went from me. She told me once for all,
Bravely and simply, what she thought and felt.
"I cannot stay. No shame has ever touched
My home," she said, "in childhood, or as wife.
My father, mother, husband, all have walked
A difficult world with footsteps clean and firm.
My son, I hoped, would always follow theirs.
Till now, he has: but now—I cannot stay.
Yet ere I go I use the mother's right
To tell you what you do, and how you stand.
You love the girl:—Love has no choice, I know:—
Marry her, and your love may make her true.
'Twere best I should not stay, were she your wife:
'Twere worse than worst to stay as things are now.
You are a man—and you must choose your path."

I did. No man lets any hand divide
His love and him, if he be truly man.
She went. The hand that all my life I'd held,
Upheld by it at first, upholding next,
Was loosed from mine—and so I went my way.
But, sir, they met again one day, those hands.
When I was—left alone, she came to me.
I lay unconscious, stricken nigh to death.
We never parted more. She had no word
Of blame or anger then. She understood.
An angel, as the phrase goes—nothing less!

When I was left alone, I said: ah, yes;—
It came to that, of course, it came to that:—
Foregone conclusions, sir: a tale oft told!
Two years of happiness, of love, of joy!
I give the memory its due. 'Tis bright.
Even the bitter memory is sweet.
Joy passed is oft forgotten or ignored;
And if it brought the candle and the sheet,
Is sometimes charged with never having been!
I do not so. The joy was full and sweet.
Those two years are the centre of my life.
The bond between us riveted itself

With ties of time as well as those of love :
When all was snapped and broken like a thread.

How did it come about?

Why, thus : the hope
That really lay the nearest to her heart
Was hope of fame, and rising in her art.
Oh, she was clever on the stage, that's sure.
At last—after those two short happy years—
A man of influence, we'll name no names,
Saw her one night. I heard about it all
Long afterwards. The offer came to her.
A London theatre and the leading parts.
An offer that might dazzle any one.
The thing she'd always dreamed of : here it was!
And with but one condition :—that not hard,
How could it be?—to leave me. And she went.
The silvery laughter died from out my life.

Once only have I heard it since. Four years
Had passed, and Time had done its usual work :—
Is it beneficent or terrible?
Time's smiles are always somewhat sinister :—
My life had reached a level once again.

She came down with a London company.
A few of us stock actors were kept on
As "understudies." When the morning came—
'Twas Monday—they arrived on Sunday night—
My mother urged me not to go: she feared
I know not what. I told her not to fear.
I went. They were rehearsing: and I stood
Deep in the shadow. She was on the stage.
She knew that I was in the company;
But she had grown a skilful actress now
Both on and off the stage. She looked about,
And saw me standing in the shadow there.
No recognition moved her smiling face.
The laughter rippled on. The place was dark.
And, going out, I stumbled on a trap,
And fell:—a foolish little accident
Which brought them kindly round me in a crowd.
Not hurt?—How fortunate!—a nasty fall!—
And did I think that it was Boxing night,
I harlequin? the low comedian asked.
They laughed it off. She laughed. I listened hard,
And thought—or was it that I liked to think?—
It did not ring quite true to life that time.
The prompter told me some time afterwards

She asked if I was cast to act with her,
And when told, "no," he thought that she was glad.
The fellow, meaning kindly, I am sure,
Tried hard to tell me more of what she asked,
Etcetera—etcetera—but I,
I changed the subject. Let us change it now.

You'll find my den a very curious place.
I gave you the address. A narrow street:
A forge exactly opposite the house:
A great place all ablaze with furnaces:
Dante's Inferno in a modern street.
Sometimes, on short dark days, the crimson light
Stencils the window all across the room,
And on the ceiling—quite a weird effect.
My mother?—no, sir: died ten years ago.
I miss her sorely, even to this day.
No one at home to keep the supper warm,
Or give the welcoming word that makes a home.
'Twere better for me were she living still;
But not for her,—I'm very sure of that.
The Swan sees me too often now. But then
What matters? twelve o'clock must come!
Ring down the curtain, and go home to bed.

And if the home be—well!—what's the address?—
You have it on the card:—why, on the way,
A glass, a smoke, a little friendly chat
Is pleasant. You will find me at the Swan.

The act is ended. Hark! a double call!
I'm glad, sir, for the honour of the house
A London manager is here to-night:
And that girl ought to make herself a name.
Another act to wait! a tedious part.
I score, though, at the last—a splendid scene!
Folks have forgotten all about me clean:
The lady thinks I'm dead, and all's condoned;
And then, when everything is going well,
I enter: Tableau! a fine scene—immense!
But things don't happen so in life, I fear.

Good-night, and thank you. I have talked too much.
Blame your own kindness: and, if you forgive,
At twelve, to-morrow, come to me. To-night,
In this queer, gas-lit room, and in this dress,
False hair, and paint, and armour made of tin,
I've babbled of realities of life:
To-morrow, in my habit as I live,

With the blast-furnace lighting up the room,
I'll tell you of my mimic life, the stage.
I shall expect you. Now I must be off
To make myself grown old by twenty years.
The process is soon done. I know it well.
You go in front? Give me a friendly hand.

THE END.

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